

# FLORIDA KEYS SCENIC HIGHWAY INTERPRETIVE MASTER PLAN

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Prepared For:

Florida Keys Scenic Highway Advisory Group

Sponsored by:
Florida Department of Transportation, District 6
Monroe County Growth Management
and
The Federal Highway Administration National Scenic Byways Program

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Florida Keys Scenic Highway Interpretive Plan

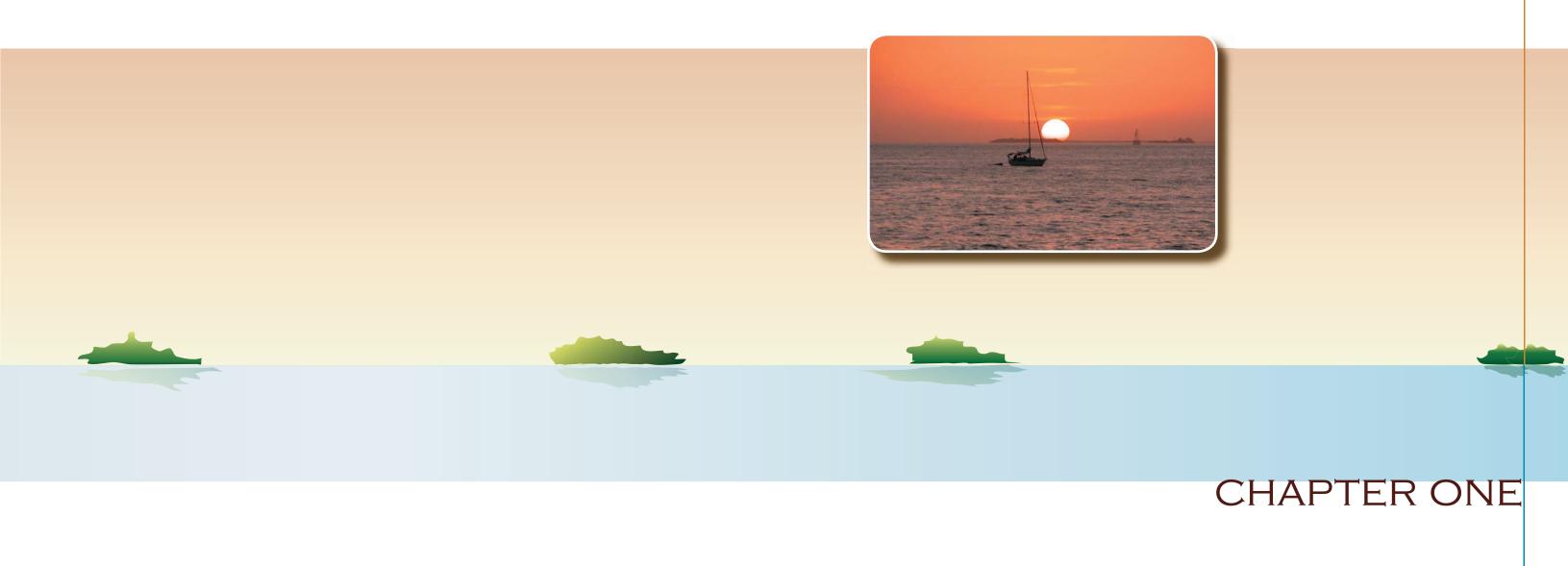








# INTRODUCTION



# CHAPTER ONE

# CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

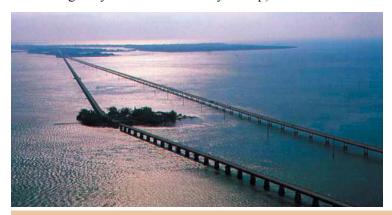
# A. Background and Importance of the Project

#### **Overview**

This document summarizes the recommendations for the implementation of the Florida Keys Overseas Scenic Highway Interpretive Plan. The plan is a comprehensive set of planning and design strategies to create a unique interpretive experience for the residents and visitors of the Florida Keys. The need for this plan was identified in the Florida Keys Scenic Highway Master Plan and the Overseas Highway Heritage Trail plan.

#### The Scenic Highway Program:

The designation of U.S. Highway 1 as a Scenic Highway came as a result of a grassroots citizen committee (Florida Keys Scenic Highway Corridor Advocacy Group) who volunteered



to work together to seek designation and to oversee the development of a long range plan for this important scenic corridor. The Florida Scenic Highway Program was created to assist communities in the State to utilize important state highway corridors as a means to enhance the quality of their communities. The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) allocates funds for the planning, design, and construction of programs and facilities that help preserve, protect, and enhance the visual, cultural, and ecological character of the surrounding community and its resources.

The citizens of the Florida Keys utilized this program to acquire their Scenic Highway designation and create their master plan. The master plan was completed in 2001. The master plan listed a series of planning priorities for the scenic highway corridor. These priorities included important elements such as aesthetic improvements, community participation, historic preservation, ecological preservation, and visitor experience enhancement. One of the highest priorities of the plan was to create a comprehensive interpretive plan for the length of the corridor to provide a unifying structure for visitor and resident experience. Because of this high priority, the Scenic Highway Advisory Group (SHAG) applied for a grant from the FDOT to prepare this comprehensive interpretive plan. The grant was approved, and this project began in the fall of 2004.

#### The Overseas Heritage Trail:

During the same time that the Scenic Highway program was being developed, there was a parallel and complimentary planning process going on. This parallel process was the development of the Heritage Trail Master Plan. The Heritage Trail Master Plan is an effort sponsored by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Division of Greenways and Trails. The DEP designated the Florida Keys US #1 corridor as an important section of the State-wide system of bikeways and trails. This corridor has also been designated a high priority for the construction of the United States East Coast Greenway from Maine to Key West. The Overseas Heritage Trail Master Plan was completed in 2000. This master plan calls for construction of a bikeway trail from Key West to the entrance to the Keys at MM 107 in Key Largo. Several sections of the trail have been constructed and several are under construction at this time. The master plan also identified the importance of integrating an interpretive program into the trail system. As a result, the DEP has become an important partner in the development of this Interpretive Plan.

# **B. Project Mission**

The mission for this plan was to create a unifying orientation and visitation framework for the interpretation of the important scenic, ecological, historical, cultural, and recreational resources of the Keys. The plan provides a system for visitors and residents to plan exploratory trips to the keys to experience the rich resources of the area via all modes of transportation: foot, bicycle, kayak, bus, and car. Visitors will be able to plan their trips on-line ahead of time and choreograph a trip that combines adventures, education, recreation, and hospitality in one package. The voyages are designed as sustainable tourism journeys into the non-traditional world of heritage and ecotourism.











# C. Project Objectives

The major objectives for the plan are as follows:

- To create a comprehensive trip planning program for heritage-tourism travel in the Keys.
- To create a system of visitor orientation facilities along the corridor to aide travelers in their on-site planning of heritage tourism adventures.
- To tell the unique natural and cultural history of the Keys' environment in a new and interesting way.
- To create a coherent thematic organizational structure for the interpretation of the natural, cultural, and heritage resources of the Keys.
- To create a coherent physical facility organizational structure for the interpretation of the natural, cultural, and heritage resources of the Keys.
- To create an interpretive experience appropriate for all modes of travel.
- To create a continuity of physical design elements that provides an identity for the Scenic Highway Interpretive Program.
- To seamlessly integrate the interpretive program and facilities into each of the communities along the corridor
- To create a governance and partnering program for the on-going management, maintenance, funding, and administration of the interpretive program and facilities.



## **D. Project Location**

The project area includes the entire US #1 highway corridor from Mile Marker (MM) 1 in Key West to Jewfish Creek Bridge at the entrance to the Keys at MM 107 in Key Largo. The corridor is defined as the archipelago of islands and the surrounding marine environment of the Florida Keys. The natural and cultural history of the region is inextricably tied to the relationship of the people, the land, and the water. As a result, the "Story of the Keys Landscape" includes all of the regional resources related to the spinal core of the highway. In addition, the corridor includes all of the communities along the highway.

# E. Project Methodology

The process utilized to develop this plan was based upon the premise that the plan must evolve out of an understanding of the resources of the region and determining the optimum means to unveil this Story in a simple yet entertaining format. As a result, an in-depth analysis of the existing resources formed the basis for the development of the interpretive framework.

The major steps in the planning process were as follows:

#### **Inventory:**

- 1. Research and document of the bio-physical and cultural evolution of the Keys.
- 2. Research and document the existing ecological, historic, cultural, recreational, and hospitality resources in the Keys.
- 3. Research and document the visitation patterns in the Keys.

#### **Analysis:**

- 1. Develop a comprehensive "Story of the Keys" interpretive framework.
- 2. Development a graphic organizational system for the existing and future intrinsic resources of the region.
- 3. Define the resident and visitor types and travel modes that experience the Keys.
- 4. Determine the existing community organizational structure inherent in the Keys.
- 5. Determine the existing and potential management and organizational partners for the Scenic Highway program

#### **Planning:**

- 1. Define the typical visitation modes, routes, and duration of stays that are utilized by the visitors in the Keys.
- 2. Define a "total length" and "community-based" visitation orientation structure.
- 3. Locate the places for each type of visitation and interpretation.
- 4. Define the allocation of interpretive content throughout the geographic and travel-mode related areas of the Keys.
- 5. Define a system, technology, and media to guide all corridor users to existing and proposed natural, cultural, and recreational resources.

#### Design:

- 1. Design the proto-typical visitation/interpretation facilities.
- 2. Design the interpretation exhibit proto-types.
- 3. Design the signage system
- 4. Design the trip planning materials

#### **Implementation:**

- 1. Determine the management and administration system for the scenic highway interpretive system.
- 2. Estimate the costs of delivering the system.
- 3. Estimate the costs of administering the system.
- 4. Development funding sources to build and operate the system.

## F. Report Organization

The report is organized in the following structure:

Chapter 1 - Introduction

**Chapter 2 - Executive Summary** 

A summary of the major points in the plan.

#### **Chapter 3** - Visitation Plan

An overview of the system that has been development to accommodate all modes of travel and provide a rich interpretive experience for all durations of visitation.

#### **Chapter 4 -** Corridor Plan

An overview of the types of the proposed visitation and interpretive facilities and the locations for each.

#### **Chapter 5** - Interpretive Plan

An overview of the interpretive content and format that will be exhibited in each of the corridor facilities.

#### **Chapter 6** - Implementation Plan

An overview of the strategies developed to make the project a reality.

#### **Chapter 7 -** Design Guidelines

Graphic plans describing the physical design characteristics of the proposed visitation/interpretation facilities.

**Chapter 8** - Proposed Conceptual Site Plans Graphic plans describing the physical site plans for selected locations along the corridor.





CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

# **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**



CHAPTER TWO

# **CHAPTER Two**

# CHAPTER TWO EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

#### A. The Corridor Plan

#### Overview

Currently, visitors to the Keys go directly to one of the five communities along the chain of islands: Key Largo, Islamorada, Marathon, Lower Keys, and Key West. Very few visitors journey the entire length in a leisurely fashion. It is the goal of the plan to reinforce the existing community oriented visitation pattern as well as encourage more travelers to enjoy a "total length experience."

Visitors to the Keys and the Scenic Highway Corridor will be ale to utilize a two tiered system of interpretation/visitation:

- 1. The "Total Length Experience"
- 2. The "Community Oriented Experience"



#### The Total Length Experience:

Visitors to the Keys will be able to plan trips that involve traveling the total length of the Keys and stopping to enjoy the resources in each community along the way. Travel planning will be available via internet to organize a route, resource sites, hospitality accommodations, rentals, and outfitters. These travel guides and routing opportunities will be available to visitors in all modes of transportation: pedestrian, bicycle, kayak, bus, and automobile. Pre-packaged plans will be available three-day, week long, and multiple week visits.

On-site travel arrangements and trip mobilization will be available at the two major trailheads located at the north and south ends of the corridor. Visitors will be able to stop in and arrange their trips on-site and mobilize their travel equipment.

All along the corridor will be rest areas, put-in/take out sites, and interpretive sites that have been strategically located to accommodate the different modes of travel.

Also, visitors will be able to select for a list of participating private sector hospitality venues to round-out their travel plans.

## **The Community Oriented Experience:**

Visitors who choose to go directly to a Keys community for their vacation experience will be able to enjoy an exciting spectrum of eco-heritage tourism activities based in their local community context. These visitors will be able to organize their day-trips on the internet prior to arriving at their destination. A resource directory will be available on-line to aide them in the planning of their daily outings.

A centrally located "Visitor Orientation Center" will be located in each of the five communities: Key Largo, Islamorada, Marathon, Lower Keys, and Key West. These Visitor Orientation Centers will be walk-in facilities and will have day-trip planning computer terminals. Visitors will be able to schedule group kayak trips, day bicycle tours, fishing trips, museum trips, or a dinner reservation from these terminals. Volunteers will be on-hand to answer questions and assist in trip planning. These visitor orientation centers will also serve as the center for interpretation orientation.

Each of the communities will have several outdoor interpretive sites to provide interpretation of the eco-heritage topics that are unique to the specific community.













## **B.** The Interpretive Plan

#### Overview

The Interpretive Plan is designed around a three-tiered interpretive structure. Visitors to the Keys will be treated to three distinctly different interpretive opportunities.

- 1. The first level of interpretation will be the **Story of the Keys Landscape level**. This level tells the bio-physical and cultural Story of the Keys Landscape from the geologic origin of the peninsula and archipelago and the resulting marine and terrestrial ecosystems through pre-historic and historic settlement to present day conditions of critical State concern.
- 2. The second level of interpretation is the **Community specific level**. A series of important facts and interesting stories (Pineapple farming, cigar factories, Jimmy Buffett, the Bat Tower, *Key Largo* movie, etc.) have been compiled for each of the five communities of the archipelago. These fun facts and stories will be told "on-location" in each community Visitor Orientation Center.
- 3. The third level of interpretation is that of the **existing intrinsic resources throughout the Keys**. This level of interpretation embraces all of the existing museums, parks, historic centers, and environmental/heritage organizations that currently exist along the corridor. The scenic highway program will provide trip planning access to these important existing amenities.

The interpretive venues are again organized around the two major visitation patterns: The Total Length Experience and the Community Oriented Experience. Each of these two tracks will have mode-specific interpretive systems.



**Ecology** 



Heritage



Culture

## **Total Length Experience:**

#### Auto/Bus

- 1. Trailhead and internet orientation to determine which interpretation sites to visit.
- Car radio station audio keyed to GPS to tell the overall Story of the Keys Landscape. Community Visitor Orientation Centers to receive the overall Story of the Keys exhibit.
- 3. Community Visitor Orientation center and the community interpretation sites to tell the community oriented stories.
- 4. Existing interpretive facilities and organizations to provide the topic specific experience.

#### Bicycle and Kayak Experience

- 1. Trailhead and internet orientation to determine which interpretation sites to visit.
- 2. Headphone audio packs keyed to GPS to tell the overall Story of the Keys Landscape. Community Visitor Orientation center and the community interpretation sites to tell the community oriented stories.
- 4. Existing interpretive facilities and organizations to provide the topic specific experience.

#### **Community Based Experience**

Community Visitor Orientation Centers

- 1. Overall Story of the Keys Landscape
- 2. Local community heritage highlights and anecdotes

#### Community Interpretive Sites

- 1. In-depth exploration of 10 sub-topics
- 2. Site specific interpretation

#### Existing Interpretive Venues

- 1. Directory and exploration of existing public and private interpretive venues
- 2. Community organizations outreach and events

# C. The Implementation Plan

#### Overview

The Implementation Plan is designed around 5 action planning elements:

- 1. The Governance Plan
- 2. The Administration Plan
- 3. The Marketing Plan
- 4. The Construction Plan
- 5. The Funding Plan

The implementation plan will also cover transportation conditions and guidance.

#### The Governance Plan:

- The SHAG (501-C3) will continue as the Executive Board for the Corridor Management Entity (CME).
- The CME will partner with the local chamber of commerce or designated non-profit organization to manage the Community Visitor Centers.
- The CME will partner with the DEP to manage the Trailhead Visitor Centers, the Community Outdoor Interpretive Sites, and the Bike Stop facilities.
- The CME will partner with the FDOT to manage the rest stop facilities.

#### **The Administration Plan:**

- •The local chambers of commerce or designated nonprofit will manage and maintain the Community Visitor Orientation Centers.
- •The DEP will manage and maintain the Trailhead Visitor Centers, the Community Outdoor Interpretive Sites, and the Bike Stop facilities.
- •The FDOT will manage and maintain the rest stop facilities.
- •The CME will partner with cities, non-profits, TDC, and the county to choreograph festivals and events programming.





CHAPTER TWO: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## The Marketing Plan:

The CME will partner with the Tourist Development Council (TDC) to develop and manage the internet site. In addition, this same team will develop and manage the marketing, interpretation, and way-finding collateral materials.

#### **The Construction Plan:**

#### **Construction Cost Estimate**

The following are construction cost estimates for each corridor plan element. There is also a construction phasing estimate which outlines the elements of two construction phases for the completion of the Scenic Highway Interpretive Plan and its built environment. The construction plan provides a cost estimate and construction phasing estimates for completion of the Scenic Highway Interpretive Plan.

1. Corridor Trailhead Stations (2) \$ 3,780,000.00

**2. Visitor Orientation Centers (5)** \$ 11,625,000.00

**3. Community Interpretive Sites (10)** \$ 15,250,000.00

4. Rest Areas (16) \$ 19,200,000.00

5. Bike Stops (11) \$ 7,150,000.00

6. Airport Kiosks (3) \$ 1,050,000.00

Total Facilities Costs: \$ 58,055,000.00

Phase 1 (0-7 Years)

**Total Cost Estimate** \$10,930,000.00

**Phase 2 (8-15 years)** 

**Total Cost Estimate** \$47,125,000.00

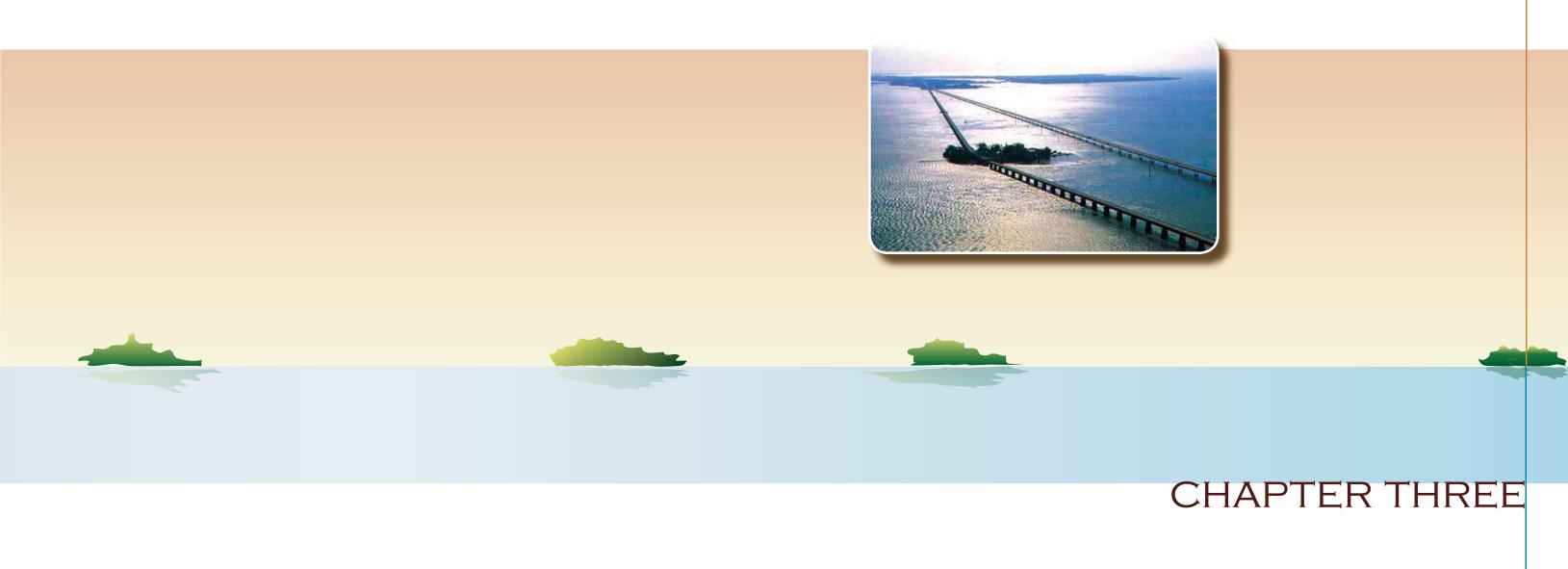
#### The Funding Plan:

Please find below a sampling of funding opportunities that might be available to Monroe County for completion of the project:

Recreation Trails Program	\$200,000
Transportation Enhancement Program	\$500,000
Florida Recreational Development Assistance	\$200,000
Land and Water Conservation Fund	\$200,000
Highway Beautification Program	\$300,000
Florida Forever (FCT)	\$6,600,000



# THE VISITATION PLAN



# CHAPTER THREE

# CHAPTER THREE

# THE VISITATION PLAN



The visitation plan describes the overall system of how visitors of different modes of travel will be able to experience the important natural and cultural attributes of the keys. This visitation plan is based upon the expected visitor profiles, the vacation patterns, the geography of the Keys, and the interpretive content.

#### A. Visitation Profiles

The Florida Keys attract visitors during all seasons of the year. The warm tropical weather and diversity of activities make the Florida Keys one of the most highly visited vacation spots. The Scenic Highway Interpretive Plan has been designed to anticipate the types of users that will take advantage of the scenic corridor and integrate the interpretive experience into the visitor's sequence of visitation.

The first step in the process of planning an effective interpretive experience is to define the user groups. The users groups for the Florida Keys are either residents or visitors who can be organized into the following subcategories: Residents and Visitors

#### **Residents**

#### **Full-time / Working**

The working residents of the Keys tend to be focused on the island communities in which they live and work. They will tend to utilize the resources of their island community during the week. On weekends, they may venture out to visit other island communities to enjoy the unique resources of these adjacent communities. These trips rarely involve over-night stays. These users will allocate time to explore new interpretive venues. They may also volunteer to assist with a particular site – particularly if they feel they are a stakeholder in it.

#### **Full-time and Part-time Retired**

The retired residents of the keys tend to be focused on the island communities in which they live. These retired residents will tend to utilize the resources of their island community. Many retirees spend only a portion of the year in the Keys – most commonly the winter season. Most retirees will avoid taking trips on the weekends to avoid the traffic and tourists. During the week, they may venture out to visit other island communities to enjoy the unique resources of these adjacent communities. These users have time to spend on longer duration interpretive venues and they may have the financial means to enjoy overnight stays in other Keys communities.

#### **Visitors**

#### **Day Trippers**

The day tourists usually visit the Keys from the southeastern coast of Florida. These visitors primarily commute by car. Rarely does a day trip tourist venture further south than Islamorada. The day trip visitors never stay at lodging accommodations but may visit the restaurants for a meal. As such, their financial contributions to the local economy are modest at best. Day trips are typically for people pursuing outdoor recreational pastimes in the waters around the Upper Keys.

#### **Weekend Escapes**

Weekend trips to the Keys are very popular throughout the year. Florida residents love to come to the Keys for a weekend. On such a trip, the visitor can get all the way to Key West. Therefore weekend trips create visitation to all island areas. The weekend visitors generally stay at the local hotels or bed and breakfasts and some take advantage of the camping opportunities at state parks or private campgrounds. These visitors often have time to enjoy an interpretive venue in the community they visit, but lack time for a sequential interpretive experience of the scenic corridor. Weekend visitors are seeking to escape their daily routine, to relax, and to pursue their pastimes.









#### Week-Long

The week- long visitors are the backbone of the Keys economy – a fact backed up by surveys conducted by the Tourist Development Council. Week-long visitors come from around the world and stay at resorts, hotels, inns, bed and breakfasts, condominium time-shares, and rental homes throughout the Keys. These visitors focus their vacation experience on the local community in which they have accommodations and then venture out to visit the attractions and resources of other island communities. These "side" trips generally occur during the week. These visitors often are interested in the ecological and heritage tourism venues.

#### Month or Seasonal

The month long and seasonal visitors to the Keys are an important part of the economy. These visitors come from around the world and stay at resorts, time-shares, bed and breakfasts, and rental homes throughout the Keys. These visitors focus their vacation experience on the local community that they are in and then venture out to visit the resources of other island communities. These "side" trips generally occur during the week unless a particular event occurs only on the weekend. These visitors tend to be more interested in the eco- and heritage tourism venues and the new experiences they may offer. Because these visitors are staying for a longer period of time, they are able to schedule longer side trips – perhaps with overnight stays. This user group will inevitably utilize more aspects of the Scenic Highway than all others. Activities that are attractive to these long-term visitors include:

- Weekend Festivals
- Weekend Community Events
- Arts and Culture
- Ecological Tourism
- Heritage Tourism
- Kayaking / Canoeing
- Fishing
- Diving

## **B.** Visitor Survey Information

Nearly 90% of visitors to the Keys arrive by motor vehicle, according to a Visitor Profile Study completed in February 2005 by the Monroe County Tourist Development Council (TDC). Of these, one third were in their own vehicle, with the remainder driving rental cars from regional airports or other cities.

Two-thirds of all visitors came to the Keys for "vacation and recreation", and Internet-based travel resources were a very important means of trip planning – far outpacing printed media. Use of travel agents for trip planning and travel purchase is declining as a result of widespread Internet use. Over forty percent of visitors surveyed were foreign; an increase from previous years. The cruise ship industry represents the largest increase in tourism activity, but nearly all of this activity is concentrated in Old Town Key West as passengers spent only an average of three to four hours on shore and spent their money on souvenirs, admission to attractions, food and alcohol.

#### C. Corridor Framework

#### **Corridor Organization**

The following are the five regions, or communities, of the Scenic Highway.

<u>I. Key Largo:</u> This northernmost community extends from mile marker 110 to mile marker 90.5 and includes Key Largo, Rock Harbor, and Tavernier.

<u>II. Islamorada:</u> This community runs from Tavernier Creek at mile marker 90.5 to the Long Key Viaduct at mile marker 64, and includes Plantation Key, Windley Key, Upper Matecumbe, Lower Matecumbe, Indian Key, Lignumvitae Key, and Long Key. Together, communities I and II comprise what is commonly referred to as the Upper Keys.

**III. Marathon:** This community runs from mile marker 64 to mile marker 43 at the middle of the Seven-Mile Bridge and includes Grassy Key, Key Vaca, Knight's Key, and tiny Pigeon Key. The communities of Marathon, Key Colony Beach, and Coco Plum Beach are within this area. Region III is commonly referred to as the Middle Keys.

**IV. Lower Keys:** This community runs from mile marker 43 to mile marker 9, including Little Duck Key, Ohio Key, Bahia Honda, Big Pine Key, the Torch Keys, Ramrod Key, Summerland Key, Cudjoe Key, the Sugarloaf Keys, the Saddlebunch Keys, and Big Coppitt Key.

<u>V. Key West:</u> This community runs from mile marker 9 to the highway's end at mile marker 0 in Old Town Key West. It includes the Naval Air Station on Boca Chica Key, Stock Island, and the city of Key West.

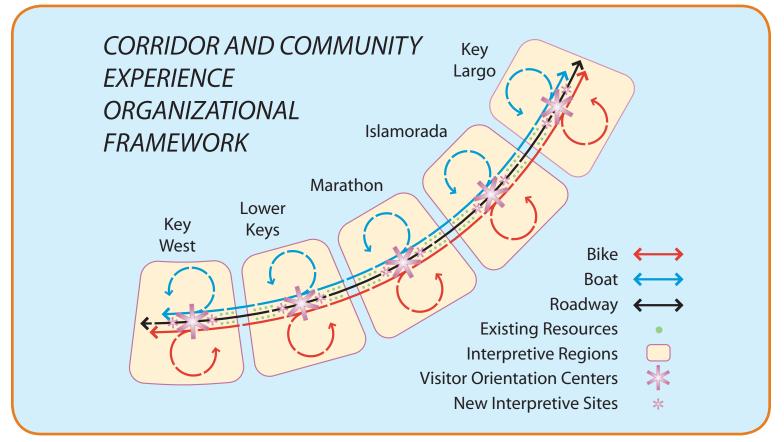
# D. Visitation Organizational Framework

It is the goal of the Visitation Plan to accommodate both the existing community oriented visitation as well as encourage more participation in the "total length" experience. As a result of this goal, the visitation framework is designed around these two ideas.

The Scenic Highway interpretive experience needs to be organized in a fashion that provides a rewarding visitor experience for the greatest number of visitors in as many travel modes as possible. The research shows that the majority of residents and visitors experience the Keys from their "home base" or community where they are staying. Very few visitors currently enjoy the total length of the island chain in a series of stops along the way.

The **total length experience** is designed around the three primary modes of travel: automobile, bicycle, and kayak. These visitors will be able to "get on-line" prior to their trip and utilize the Scenic Highway website to design and plan their trips. In addition, there are Corridor Trailhead Stations, Rest Areas, and Bicycle Stops to accommodate those traveling the total length. These are discussed further in Chapters 4 and 5.

The **community based** visitor experience is designed to assist residents and visitors with their planning their eco-heritage tourism adventures in their respective communities. These users are able to go to a central Visitor Orientation Center located in the community where they can find information about the fun adventures and interpretive experiences. There are also Community Interpretive Sites, designed for each specific community. These are discussed further in Chapters 4 and 5.



The five communities are distinct interpretive regions.

#### The Total Length Car Experience

Visitors who choose to experience the whole length of the Keys want to envelope themselves in the sights, sounds, smells, and intrigue of the island chain. To that end, they will seek information, often in advance of their trip, to facilitate an enjoyable and fulfilling experience. That experience will have more or less depth, depending upon their length of stay and mode of travel.

The modes by which people experience the Keys can be categorized in the following ways:

#### Auto

Almost 90% of users visit the Keys by motor vehicle, but distinctions can be made based upon the length of stay.

#### Week-long

A small number of visitors will take a week to drive from Key Largo to Key West, spending the night in a different location each evening as they make their way down the Keys. These visitors will have ample time to explore recreational resources and tourist opportunities. In many ways, they represent the ideal visitor who will experience almost all the offerings along the length of the Scenic Highway. We can expect them to stop at many of the interpretive centers and overlooks, at many historic and cultural resources, and to spend time exploring restaurants, shops, and tourist venues. They will be seeking guidance as to which of the numerous stops they should experience.

These visitors will most certainly organize their trip ahead of time using the Scenic Highway website. They will be able to find overnight accommodations, restaurants, and major activities they want to partake in. There will be "package" trips available for those who do not want to spend a lot of time planning. The website will identify the major scenic highway interpretive sites, visitor centers, and other ecological and historical adventures available. When these visitors arrive in the Keys, they can stop at one of the main trailheads and pick up specific information and "trip-tic" brochures to aide them on their journey. Over time, it is hoped that this user profile will become a major segment of the scenic highway tourism.

#### One Day Trip

These visitors currently represent a larger proportion of those driving the length of the Keys. We can assume they will stop at one to two interpretive centers, and at two to three rest areas, or three to four rest areas and one to two major cultural sites. These day-long visitors can go "on-line" and design their trip to their final destination. Many of these users will stop at the trailhead and customize their trip on the spot. There will be "pre-planned" trip-tics for these visitors that feature one or two community centers. In addition to the trip-tics, there will be audio narrations available as cassette tapes, CDs, or "pod-casts" to tell the story of the Keys as they travel.

#### Two Hour Trip

These visitors are driving as quickly as they can from Key Largo to Key West (and visa versa), but seek to experience the roadway, enjoying funky tourist attractions visible from the road and the natural beauty visible from the bridges. They would enjoy an audio presentation in their car with a narrator explaining some of the cultural and natural history they are observing through their windshield, some good music, a few oral histories, and some information describing what they might want to see on their next trip to the Keys. These visitors can stop at the trailhead and get equipped for their 2-1/2 hour eco-heritage adventure.

#### **Bicycle**

#### One to Two Week Trip

Bicyclists riding the length of the Overseas Heritage Trail will have ample time to stop and enjoy many of the experiences along the way. Like the week-long automobile trippers, they will experience almost all the offerings along the length of the Scenic Highway. As they pedal fifteen to twenty miles a day, we can expect them to stop at every interpretive center and overlook, at many historic and cultural resources, and to spend time exploring hotels, restaurants, shops, and tourist venues.

These bike tourists will most certainly go "on-line" to plan their trips. Special accommodations tailored to the cycling crew will be highlighted. When these visitors arrive at the trailheads, they will be able to tune and repair their bikes, park their cars, purchase provisions, and their customized "trip-tic" map for their adventure. The bikers will be able to get audio devices to tell the story of the keys as they pause to rest at designated stops along the Overseas Heritage Trail.

#### **Kayak**

#### Two Week Trip

Paddlers experiencing the length of the Overseas Paddling
Trail will see the Keys from a unique perspective. They may
cross alternatively from the Florida Bay side to the Atlantic
side and back as they make their trip to desired destinations
and as weather conditions change. Their stops will be limited
to areas with kayak put-ins. They will experience only those
interpretive centers, rest stops, historical and cultural resources, hotels, restaurants, shops and tourist venues at the put-ins.
Kayakers who choose to walk a mile or so to visit other Keys
resources will need a secure place to leave a kayak loaded with
gear. Kayakers will want to carry information in a waterproof
format with reliable mileage (in tenth of a mile increment) between the put-in and the tourist resource. In addition, kayakers
will be able to experience islands not accessible to other Keys
travelers. Nautical charts will be a necessity.

The kayakers will need the most comprehensive planning. A special section of the website will detail the "put-in" and "stop-over" locations. The trip planning website will also locate places for provisions and adventure supplies. When the kayakers arrive at the trailheads, they will be able to stock up on supplies, repair gear, and get their marine oriented "trip-tic" map for their adventure. These will integrate the various way-finding systems including GPS coordinates, marine navigation buoys or channel markers, and mile markers along the Scenic Highway. These visitors will also be able to get audio narrations in various formats to give them a unique interpretive overview from the water.







Traveling by bicycle.



Traveling by kayak.

#### **The Community Center Experience**

The Community Center experience is designed to provide an enriching eco-heritage experience for the visitors and residents in each community. Residents will be able to plan their adventures in a leisurely fashion over the duration of their stay. The experience venue is designed to provide a little something for everyone. There are two venues for the Community Center Experience: the Visitor Orientation Center and the Outdoor Community Interpretive Experience.

#### **Visitor Orientation Center**

Each of the five communities of the Keys (Key Largo/ Tavernier, Islamorada, Marathon, Big Pine/Lower Keys, and Key West) will have a Visitor Orientation Center to provide trip planning, information and interpretation. These five Visitor Orientation Centers will provide visitors with an overview of the Scenic Highway and detailed information about experiences available within that community node including interpretation, a travel directory, and connections to outfitters.

The Scenic Highway and the Heritage Trail websites will encourage visitors to begin their visit to each community at the Visitor Orientation Centers. The following will be provided at each of the five Visitor Orientation Centers:

**Interpretation**: The central area will have two interpretive exhibits. Each center will have one common exhibit that interprets the total "Story of the Keys Landscape." There will also be a second interpretive exhibit that will highlight natural, cultural, or heritage events specific to each community.

Travel Directory: The travel directory will provide information about walking, biking, kayaking trails, and points of interest along the roadway in each community. The information presented is not intended to conflict with what is presented at the Chamber of Commerce information centers, but rather to suggest off-the-beaten path, outdoor, nature-oriented opportunities for visitors choosing to walk, bike, or paddle the trail. Motorists will be encouraged to leave their car behind as they explore each node, and to walk trails, rent bikes or kayaks, or take trolleys.

**Information Desk:** A volunteer staff person will be available to help orient visitors at each Visitor Orientation Center. They will offer maps, talk about their favorite local spots, answer questions, and generally help those new to the area to discover the many ways in which the Keys can be appreciated and explored – off the beaten path.

**Vending:** Vending machines may be placed at the facility to allow for the purchase of drinks and snacks.

**Outfitters:** Information about local outfitters will be provided, particularly those who offer ways to explore the Keys that take visitors off the roadways.

#### Modes of Travel: Auto, Bicycle, Kayak, Walking

The Visitor Orientation Center can recommend day-long, half-day, and two-hour loop trips from that Visitor Orientation Center, as well as from the rest areas, bike stops, and kayak put-ins in that community node. Information pamphlets and staff/volunteers will provide clear directions to get to the starting point of each self-guided tour, the distance the tour will cover, and how long the tour will take. They will provide information on ecology, history, and heritage resources available along the way. They will encourage visitors to use alternative modes of transportation and to experience the Keys on foot, by bike, or by kayak.

#### **Community Interpretive Sites**

Each community area will have two to three outdoor interpretive sites focusing on the ecological, heritage, or cultural assets of the community. These sites will be located in beautiful, natural settings and will be utilized to tell important eco-heritage stories that are unique to each community. These facilities will have shaded picnic facilities, trails, boardwalks, and interpretive signage to provide a rich interpretive experience.



## **E.** The Interpretation Framework

The interpretation framework for the Scenic Highway is organized around the visitation framework with two tracks: 1) the "total length" interpretive experience, and 2) the "community based" interpretive experience. Both of these interpretive tracks will share a common set of interpretive stations.

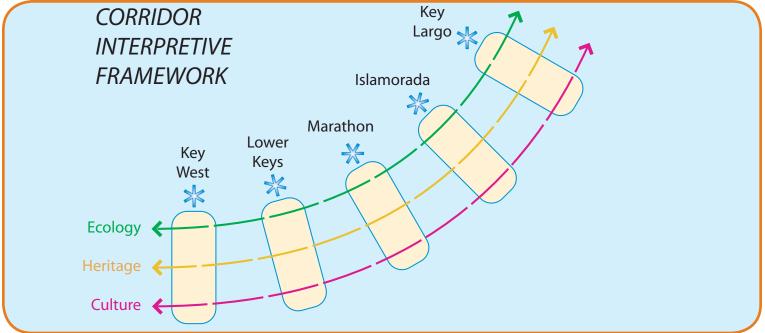
The interpretive content is organized in the three-theme structure of: Ecology, Heritage, and Culture. The primary content is *The Story of the Keys Landscape*, which is located in all five of the Visitor Orientation Centers. This "story" is the chronological history of the formation of the islands and the settlement and growth of the population, providing an overview orientation for the entire Keys.

A second exhibit in the Visitor Orientation Center is based on "ribbons of interpretation." This involves the telling of interesting stories that are unique to each community within the three interpretive "ribbons" of Ecology, Heritage, and Culture. These three interpretive categories are color-coded in an exciting graphic format to tie them together along the length of the Keys so that a visitor can easily distinguish which exhibit will feature an Ecological, Heritage, or Cultural aspect. Visitors are able to trace the different ribbons through color; Green for ecology, yellow for heritage, and pink for culture.

Visitors will be encouraged to explore the three interpretive themes in each of the five regions. The themes will allow visitors to come away from their Keys visit with a deep appreciation for the complex eco-systems, the nuanced history, and the unique characteristics of each community in the Keys. Each of the themes will be explored in each of the regions - providing a story ribbon the length of the Scenic Highway. Visitors can choose to explore all three stories, or only one or two based on their interest. Or, as is more likely, visitors will explore different ribbons in different regions, developing an overall understanding of the three themes, according to their interests. These three interpretive themes are discussed in much greater detail in Chapter 5 of this report - The Interpretive Plan.

The Total Length visitors (auto, bike, and kayak) will journey the length of the keys. These visitors will get the overview of the "Story of the Keys" via audio interpretive devices and an interpretive exhibit at each Visitor Center. These same visitors can then stop at various locations along their routes and get more unique interpretive experiences at each of the Outdoor Interpretive Sites.

The Community Based visitors will get the overview "Story of the Keys Landscape" at the community Visitor Orientation Center and a local interpretive experience.



Three ribbons of interpretation are found throughout the five communities of the Keys. Ecology is represented by the color green, Heritage by yellow, and Culture by pink. The colors will cue the traveler as to what area they are about to explore and also provide continuity throughout the Scenic Highway.

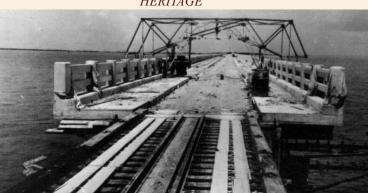
#### **Interpretive Framework**

Visitors will be encouraged to explore the three interpretive themes in each of the five regions. The themes: *ecology*, heritage, and culture will allow visitors to come away from their Keys visit with a deep appreciation for the complex ecosystems, the nuanced history, and the unique characteristics of each community in the Keys.

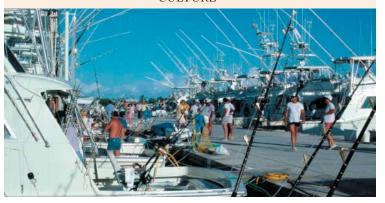
Each of the themes will be explored in each of the regions – providing a story ribbon the length of the Overseas Highway. Visitors can choose to explore all three stories, or only one or two based on their interest. Or, as is more likely, visitors will explore different ribbons in different regions, developing an overall understanding of the three themes, according to their interests. These three interpretive themes are discussed in much greater detail in Chapter 4 of this report – The Interpretive Plan.







**CULTURE** 



## F. Visitation Planning and Guidance

#### 1) Brochures with Maps

Visitors will be able to start planning their trip at home and gather more information at Visitor Orientation Centers as they arrive in the Keys. A variety of brochures will explain the many options available for visitors traveling by auto, bike, or kayak.

#### 2) Web-based Trip Planner

A website will be established to enable visitors to plan their trip from home with greater detail than that currently available from tourist-related websites. This website will also be accessible at the Visitor Orientation Centers using terminals. It will contain links to the many organizations in the Keys that would enhance their visit.

#### 3) Trip-Tic Trail Maps

Visitors will be encouraged to use the website to create their own trip-tic style trail maps, outlining week-long, day-long, half-day, and two hour loop trails.

#### 4) Trail/Node Signing

As visitors drive the length of the Scenic Highway, new signage will allow them to find interpretive sites and Visitor Orientation Centers more easily. This signage may deviate from traditional highway signage - being more artistic in nature.

#### 5) Kiosks

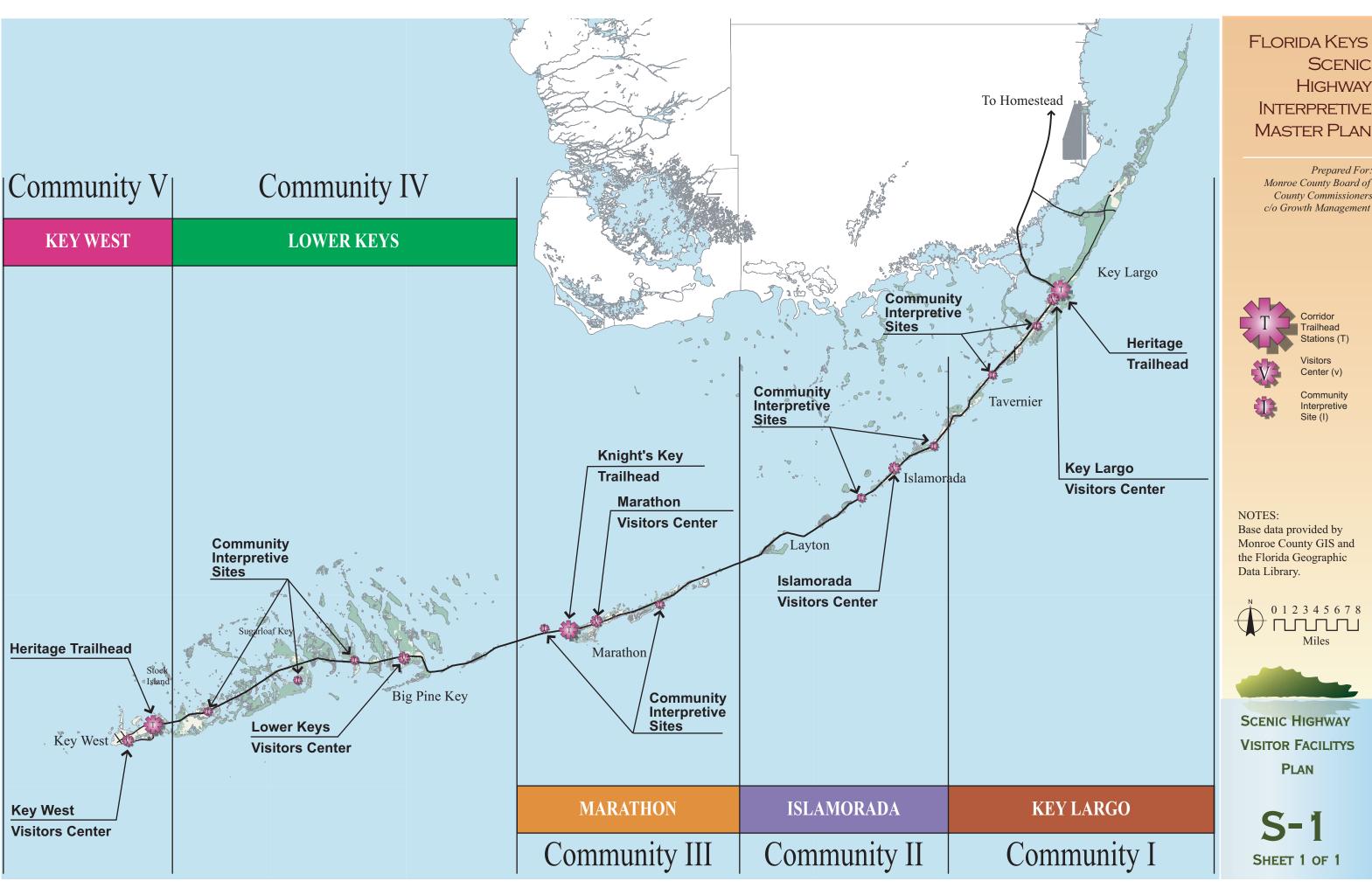
Information kiosks will be located at the three major airports: Miami International, Key West International, and Marathon. These kiosks will provide information about the Scenic Highway experience for those arriving to the Keys by air.





Right: The opening ceremony of the 7-mile bridge



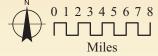


**SCENIC HIGHWAY** INTERPRETIVE MASTER PLAN

> Prepared For: Monroe County Board of County Commissioners c/o Growth Management



Base data provided by Monroe County GIS and the Florida Geographic





**VISITOR FACILITYS** 

# THE CORRIDOR FACILITIES PLAN



# CHAPTER FOUR

# CHAPTER FOUR

# THE CORRIDOR FACILITIES PLAN

# A. Overview of the Corridor System

The Corridor Plan sets forth the locations for all of the proposed facilities that will compose the Scenic Highway experience. The facilities are located in each of the five communities to provide local stewardship and to have the facilities equally spaced along the corridor. This Corridor Plan contains a detailed map of the corridor showing the locations of all of the proposed new scenic highway facilities as well as all existing resources. This corridor map will be the database for the directional and trip planning maps, brochures, and online resources.

The Corridor Plan locates all of the facilities for the Scenic Highway Interpretive Plan and describes the activities, and function of each of these areas. The sites for the corridor facilities have been selected based upon: the availability of land, community and highway access, and interpretive opportunities. The sites have also been organized to provide an optimum interpretive experience for both the total length traveler as well as the community based visitor.

The Scenic Highway Corridor Plan is organized around two visitation types: 1) total length visitation and, 2) the community center experience. The total length experience provides visitors in autos, on bicycles, or in kayaks the opportunity to traverse the length of the Keys in a leisurely fashion. The community center experience is organized in a manner that provides a wide range of interpretive and recreational activities within each community along the Scenic Highway.

## **The Total Length Experience**

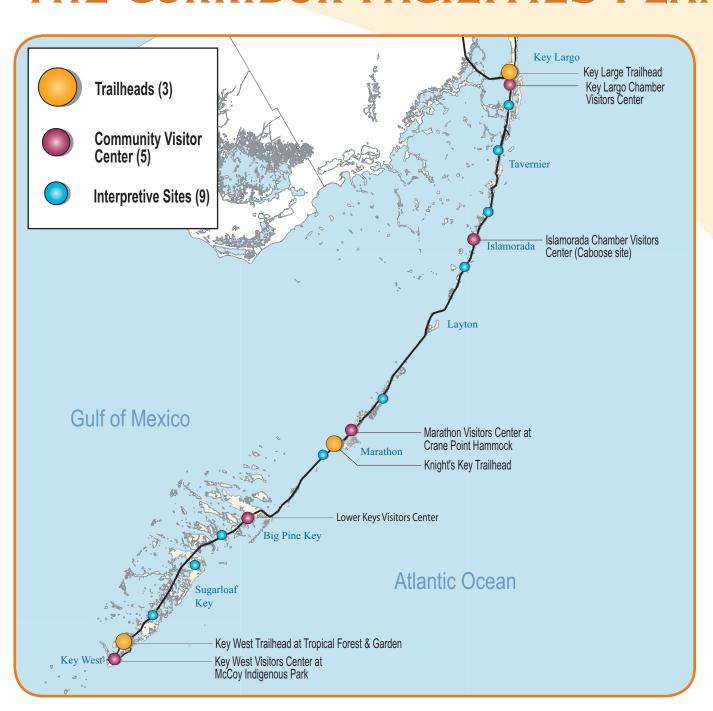
All of the total length visitors will begin their visit at one of the two major trailhead facilities where they may receive advice in finalizing their trip plans. From the trailhead, they will proceed on their journey to enjoy the sites they have chosen and stay at the accommodations they have reserved. Amenities are provided for those traveling by automobile, bicycle, or kayak.

## **Community Center Experience**

The community center visitors will have a series of community related activities available to them. Visitors will be able to experience the unique aspects of each community via auto, bicycle, kayak, or on foot.



Sunset over the Seven Mile Bridge











# **B.** Total Length Corridor Facilities

#### 1) Corridor Trailhead Stations (T)

The Corridor Trailhead Stations are located at each end of the Scenic Highway. These facilities will function as beginning points for visitors to the scenic highway corridor. They will accommodate some overnight parking where trail users may leave their vehicles. As usage increases, provision of off-site parking with shuttle service may be necessary. Trip planning information will be available including printed maps, interactive trip planning software, website, trip-tic maps, safety information, and basic provisions for visitors. Corridor Trailhead Stations are denoted as T1 and T2 when referred to in the text and on the directory maps (pages 34 to 40).

#### **Physical Program:**

- 1. Site
  - a. Auto Parking
  - b. Bicycle Parking
  - c. Bicycle and Kayak Storage
  - d. Site ID Signage
  - e. Landscape
- 2. Building
  - a. Front Desk
  - b. Administration Offices
  - c. Restrooms / Showers
  - d. Maintenance/ Janitorial / Storage
  - e. Bicycle / Kayak Repair Shop
  - f. Café
  - g. Provisions / Store
  - h. Motorized Travel Orientation Room
  - i. Bicycle Orientation Room
  - j. Kayak Orientation Room
  - k. Scenic Corridor Overview Room

#### **Information Program:**

- 1. Building:
  - a. Motorized Travel
    - i. Route Mapping
    - ii. Accommodations
    - iii. Safety Tips
  - b. Bicycle travel
    - i. Route Mapping
    - ii. Accommodations
    - iii. Safety Tips

- c. Kayak travel
  - i. Route Mapping
  - ii. Accommodations
- iii. Safety Tips

#### **Interpretive Program:**

- 1. Building:
  - a. Overview of the Scenic Highway Program
  - b. Overview of the Overseas Highway Heritage Trail Program
  - c. Overview of the Overseas Paddling Trail

#### **Physical Program for Visitor Orientation Centers**

- 1. Site
  - a. Motorized Vehicle Parking
  - b. Bicycle Parking
  - c. Landscape
  - d. Site ID Signage
- 2. Building
  - a. Rest Rooms
  - c. Cafe/Gallery
  - d. Trip Planning Room
  - e. Story of the Keys Landscape Room
  - f. Local Interpretation Room

#### **Information Program for Visitor Orientation Centers**

- 1. Safety Information
- 2. Ecological Tips
- 3. Auto Trip Routing
- 4. Bicycle Trip Routing
- 5. Paddle Trip Routing
- 6. Pedestrian Trip Routing

#### **Physical Program**

- 1. Site
  - a. Motorized vehicle parking
  - b. Bicycle parking
  - c. Kayak put-in (where appropriate)
  - d. Picnic shelters
  - e. Boardwalks
  - f. Interpretive Trails
  - g. Landscaping

#### **Information Program for Interpretive Sites**

The information program consists of that site's interpretive content.











#### 2) Corridor Rest Areas (RA)

A system of sixteen scenic highway rest areas is proposed along the 106 miles of the Scenic Highway through the Keys. These facilities are intended to provide comfort to road weary motorists. They are not intended to be interpretive sites, however, there may be some interpretive information if appropriate.

The majority of these sites are currently existing FDOT rest area locations. It is the intention of this plan to renovate and upgrade these existing sites to provide a more pleasing rest area experience. The sites will be upgraded and enhanced by: improving access and parking, and adding landscape, picnic, and restroom amenities. Where possible, trails will be added to provide pleasant shaded viewing areas at the water's edge. These rest areas will be available to all travelers of every mode of travel. The rest area names, description, and locations can be found on pages 34 to 40 and are coded with a "(RA)" designation.

An outline of the physical and information program for the rest areas is as follows:

### **Physical Program:**

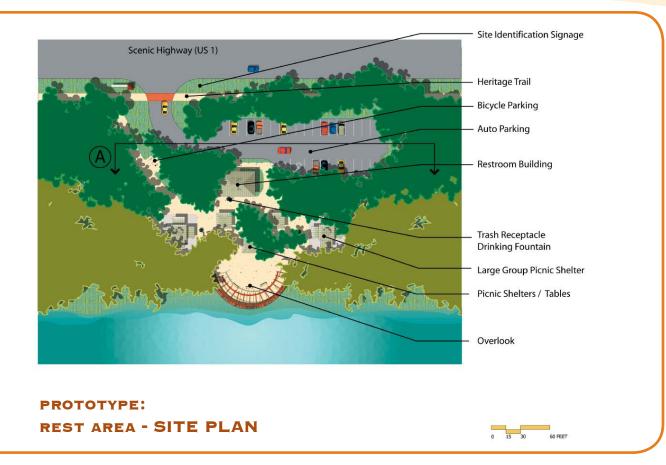
- 1. Auto Parking
- 2. Bicycle Parking
- 3. Picnic shelters/tables
- 4. Benches
- 5. Trash receptacles
- 6. Drinking fountain
- 7. Trail to overlook (if available)
- 8. Landscaping

#### **Information Program:**

- 1. Safety information
- 2. Ecological Tips
- 3. Trail location ID sign

#### **Interpretive Program:**

1. As appropriate





PROTOTYPE:

**REST AREA - ELEVATION A** 

#### 3) Corridor Bicycle Stops (BS)

The bicycle users of the Scenic Highway will need to have more rest locations than the automobile travelers. As a result, there is a need for additional stops for these bicycle travelers. Eleven additional stops have been added to the rest stops available to bikers. Many of these bicycle stops are located at or near existing FDOT road side pull-off areas. These existing sites will need to be renovated and adapted to accommodate the bike stop needs. Safer access and crossings will need to be added. In addition, native landscaping, picnic pavilions, and bike racks will need to be added. Where feasible, trails will be added to allow bikers to walk to the water's edge to enjoy the views and sunsets. The bike stop names, descriptions, and locations can be found on pages 34 to 40 and are denoted with a "(BS)."

An outline of the physical, information, and interpretive program for the Corridor Bicycle Stops is as follows:

#### **Physical Program:**

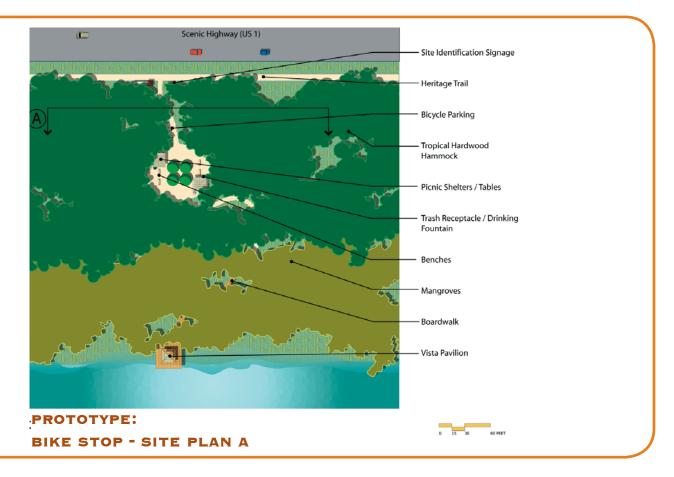
- 1. Bicycle parking
- 2. Picnic shelters/tables
- 3. Benches
- 4. Trash receptacles
- 5. Drinking fountain
- 6. Trail to overlook (if available)
- 7. Landscaping

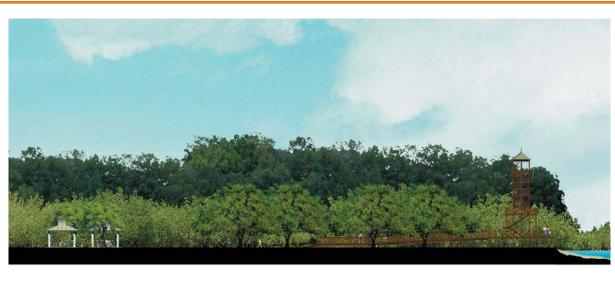
#### **Information Program:**

- 1. Safety information
- 2. Ecological tips
- 3. Trail location ID sign

#### **Interpretive Program:**

1. As appropriate





PROTOTYPE:

**BIKE STOP - ELEVATION A** 



#### 4) Corridor Orientation Kiosks (K)

Kiosks are recommended for placement within the lobbies of airports in Key West, Marathon, and Miami. These kiosks will provide information about the Scenic Highway Program. They are not intended for the distribution of traditional tourist information, but rather to focus on eco-heritage tourism. These kiosks will inform prospective visitors to the Keys about the Scenic Highway Program. Visitors arriving at the airport may or may not be aware of the program. Therefore, the kiosk will let them know about the interpretive and recreational activities that are available through the program. In addition, the kiosks will direct visitors to the website, trailheads, and community visitor orientation centers to find out further information. For kiosk locations and descriptions, see pages 29 to 35. Kiosks are coded with a "K."

The physical and information program for the Orientation Kiosks will contain the following:

#### **Physical Program:**

- 1. Information Kiosk
- 2. Seating
- 3. Website portal
- 4. Trash receptacles

#### **Information Program:**

- 1. Scenic Highway Orientation Map
- 2. Auto, Bicycle, Kayak Program Brochures
- 3. Safety Information
- 4. Ecological Tips



PROTOTYPE:

**AIRPORT KIOSK - ELEVATION A** 



## **C.** Community Oriented Facilities

## 1) Community Visitor Orientation Centers (V)

The Community Visitor Orientation Centers are the heart of the Scenic Highway Interpretive Plan. These Centers will become the eco-heritage tourism orientation forums for each community. Residents and visitors alike will gather at these Centers to trade ideas on recreational and interpretive outings. These Centers will primarily serve the visitors to the local community to aide them in planning their local activities. However, the Centers will also serve the total length travelers to orient them at each stop.

The Visitor Orientation Centers have been located as close to the heart of each of the five communities as is feasible. Facilities at each Visitor Orientation Center will include parking for automobiles and bicycles, and provisions. Staff volunteers who know the community well, and are equipped to interpret local ecological, historical, and cultural amenities will man the front desk. Trip-planning areas will allow visitors to gather information on eco-heritage tourism, food, lodging, and points of interest. In particular, visitors will be able to pick up information on bicycle, hiking, and kayaking trails in that community.

Each of the Centers has an interpretive exhibit entitled *Story* of the Keys Landscape, providing an overview of the Florida Keys. Additional exhibit space at each Center is dedicated to materials that deal more specifically with the natural, heritage, and cultural highlights located within each community. The Visitor Orientation Center names, descriptions, and locations can be found on pages 34 to 40 and are coded with a "V" on the maps.

#### **Physical Program:**

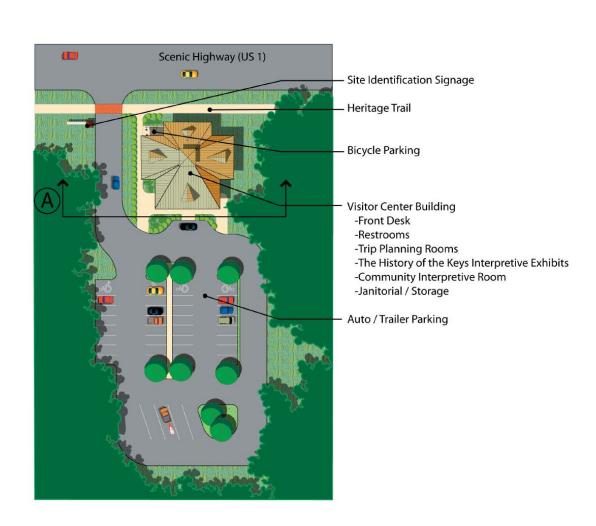
- 1. Site
- a. Motorized vehicle parking
- b. Bicycle parking
- c. Landscape
- d. Site ID signage
- 2. Building
  - a. Rest rooms
  - b. Cafe/Gallery
  - c. Trip planning room
  - d. Story of the Keys Landscape room
  - e. Local interpretation room

#### **Information Program**

- 1. Safety information
- 2. Ecological tips
- 3. Auto trip routing
- 4. Bicycle trip routing
- 5. Paddle trip routing
- 6. Pedestrian trip routing

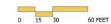
#### **Interpretive Program**

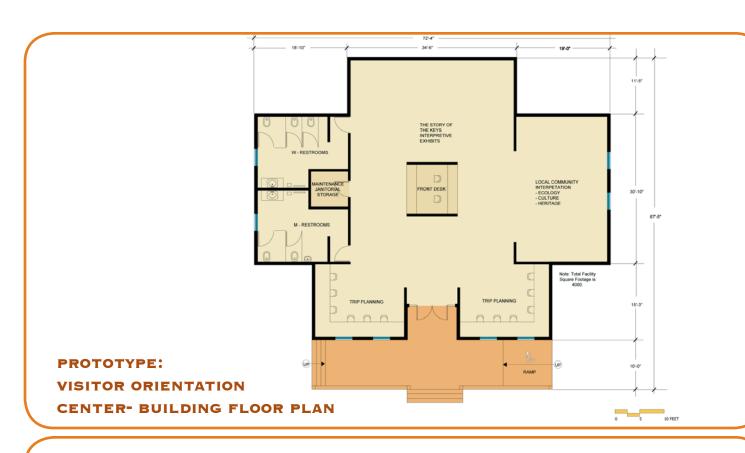
- 1. Story of the Keys Landscape exhibit
- 2. Ecological, heritage, and cultural highlights of the community



#### PROTOTYPE:

**VISITOR ORIENTATION CENTER - SITE PLAN** 







PROTOTYPE: VISITOR ORIENTATION CENTER - ELEVATION A







PROTOTYPE:
VISITOR ORIENTATION CENTER BUILDING ELEVATION



VISITOR ORIENTATION CENTER - EXHIBIT FORMAT

#### 2) Community Interpretation Sites (I)

Community Interpretive Sites allow travelers to stop and learn about the unique ecological, heritage, and cultural aspects of the local community while experiencing the wind, water, and landscape all around them. These sites will have parking for both automobiles and bicycles and, where appropriate, kayak put-ins. Picnic pavilions, benches, boardwalks, and landscaping will contribute to a relaxed scenic atmosphere.

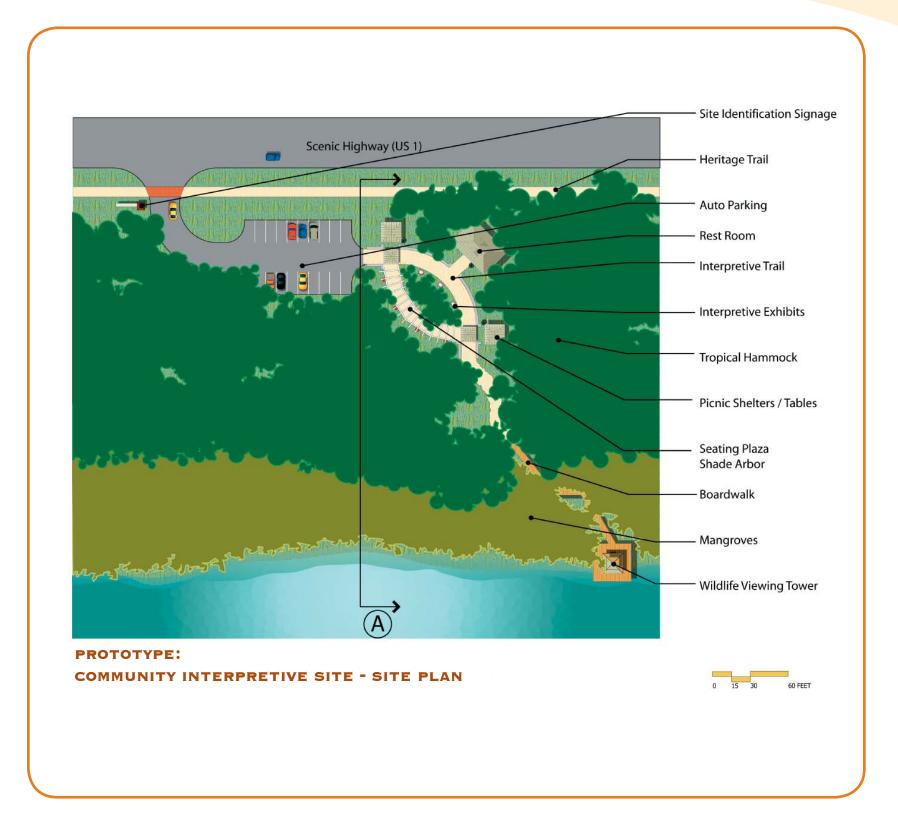
These interpretive sites will be sited to overlook beautiful views and may have short trails to "getaway" from the highway. Works of art may be used to help visitors "see" and understand the invisible - ocean currents, historic artifacts, or other interpretive concepts. The Community Interpretive Sites names, descriptions, and locations can be found on pages 34 to 40 and are coded with an "I".

#### **Physical Program**

- 1. Site
  - a. Motorized vehicle parking
  - b. Bicycle parking
  - c. Kayak put-ins (where appropriate)
  - d. Picnic pavilions
  - e. Boardwalks
  - f. Interpretive trails
  - g. Landscaping

#### **Information Program**

1. Ecological, heritage, and cultural interpretive exhibits focusing on the unique aspects of the local community.







# SCENIC HIGHWAY FACILITIES DIRECTORY

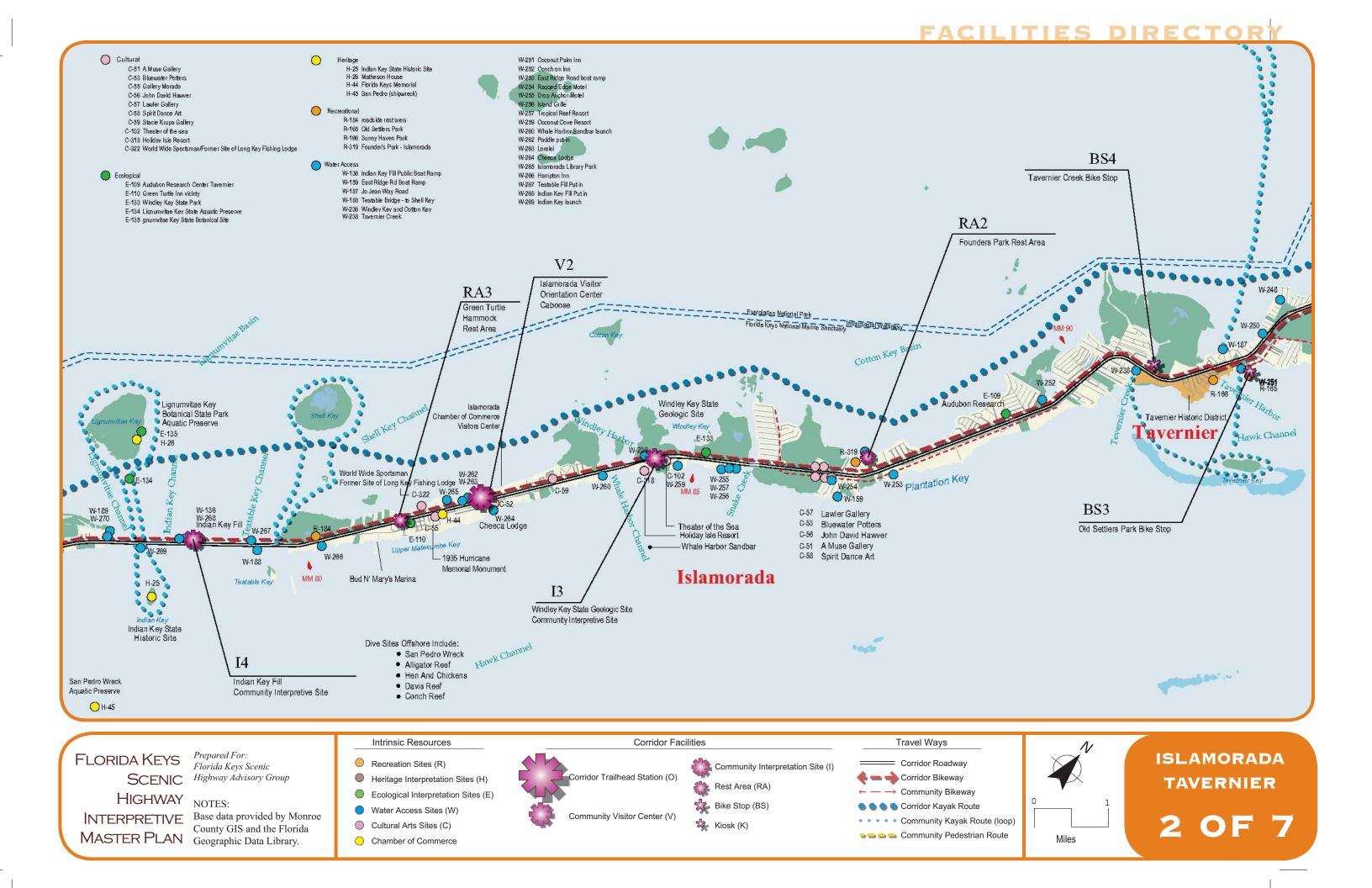
The Corridor Facilities Plan – began with an overview of the corridor interpretive system and divided it into two sets of experiences: 1) a "total length" experience and, 2) a "community center" experience. The rationale for this is many visitors have Key West as their destination and since 90% of them are traveling by car they must drive the length of the Overseas Highway. A few (but growing number) of adventurous individuals are also traveling the length of the island chain by bicycle or sea kayak and they too experience the Keys in their entirety – arguably more so than motorists. Other Keys visitors spend the duration of their trip in one specific location or community and/or arrive in Key West by plane or boat. These visitors do not have an opportunity to travel the length of the Scenic Highway but can avail themselves to attractions in their local community.

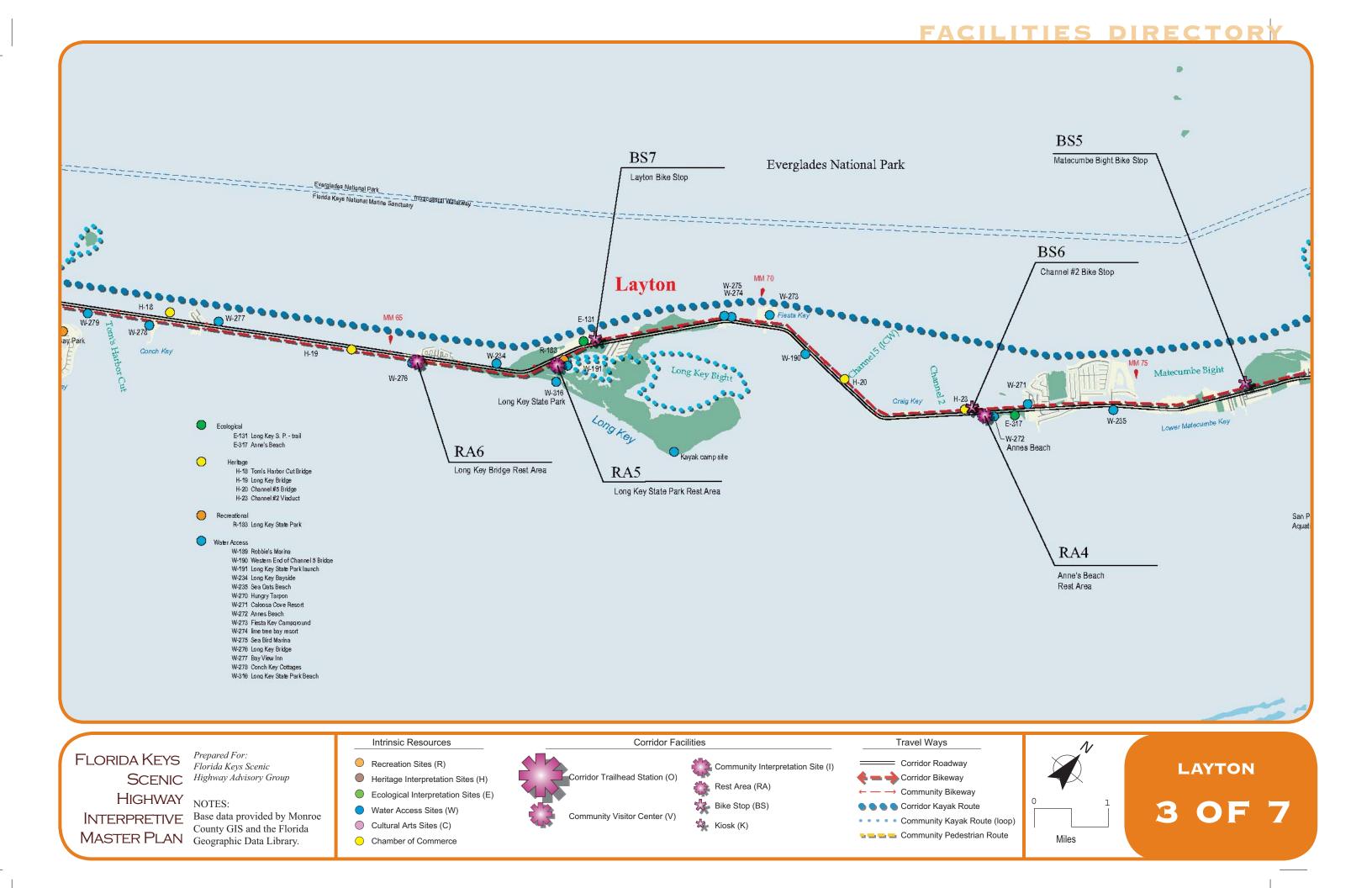
A double edged approach of addressing the needs of these visitors has been employed in this plan. One series of facilities is designed with the "total length" visitor in mind. These include Heritage Trailhead Stations and Bike Stops for users of the Overseas Heritage Trail and also motor vehicle-based Rest Areas for travelers along the Scenic Highway. The second group of facilities is intended to address the needs of the five communities of the Keys. These include Visitor Centers and Interpretive Sites. All of these facilities may be utilized and enjoyed by visitors in either group as well as by local residents.

The following series of maps shows the location and names of all of these proposed facilities. Additional points of interest termed "Intrinsic Resources" are located on these pages as well. The maps are numbered 1 through 7 and progress from northeast to southwest: beginning at Key Largo and continuing down the length of the Scenic Highway to Key West.

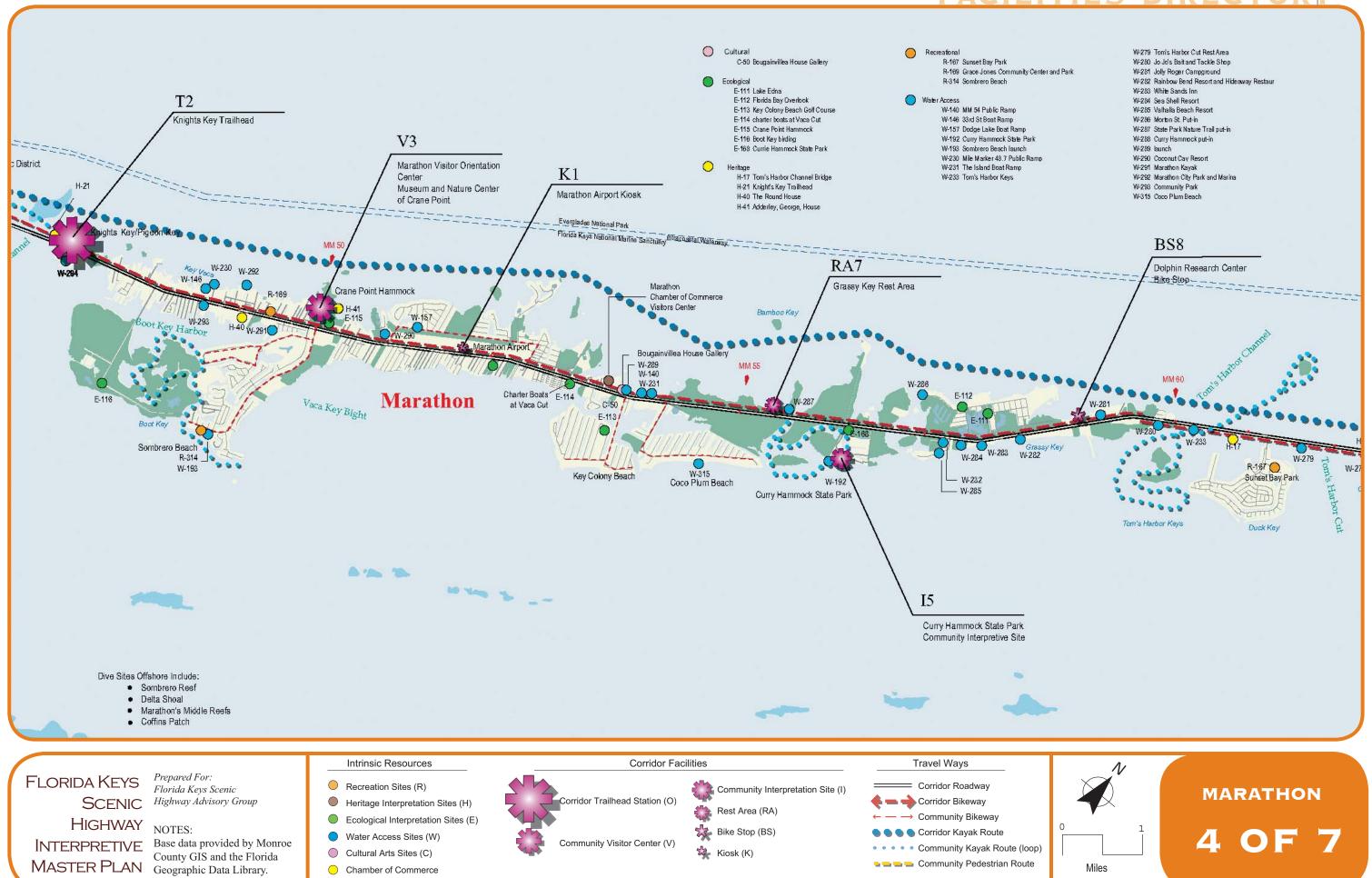




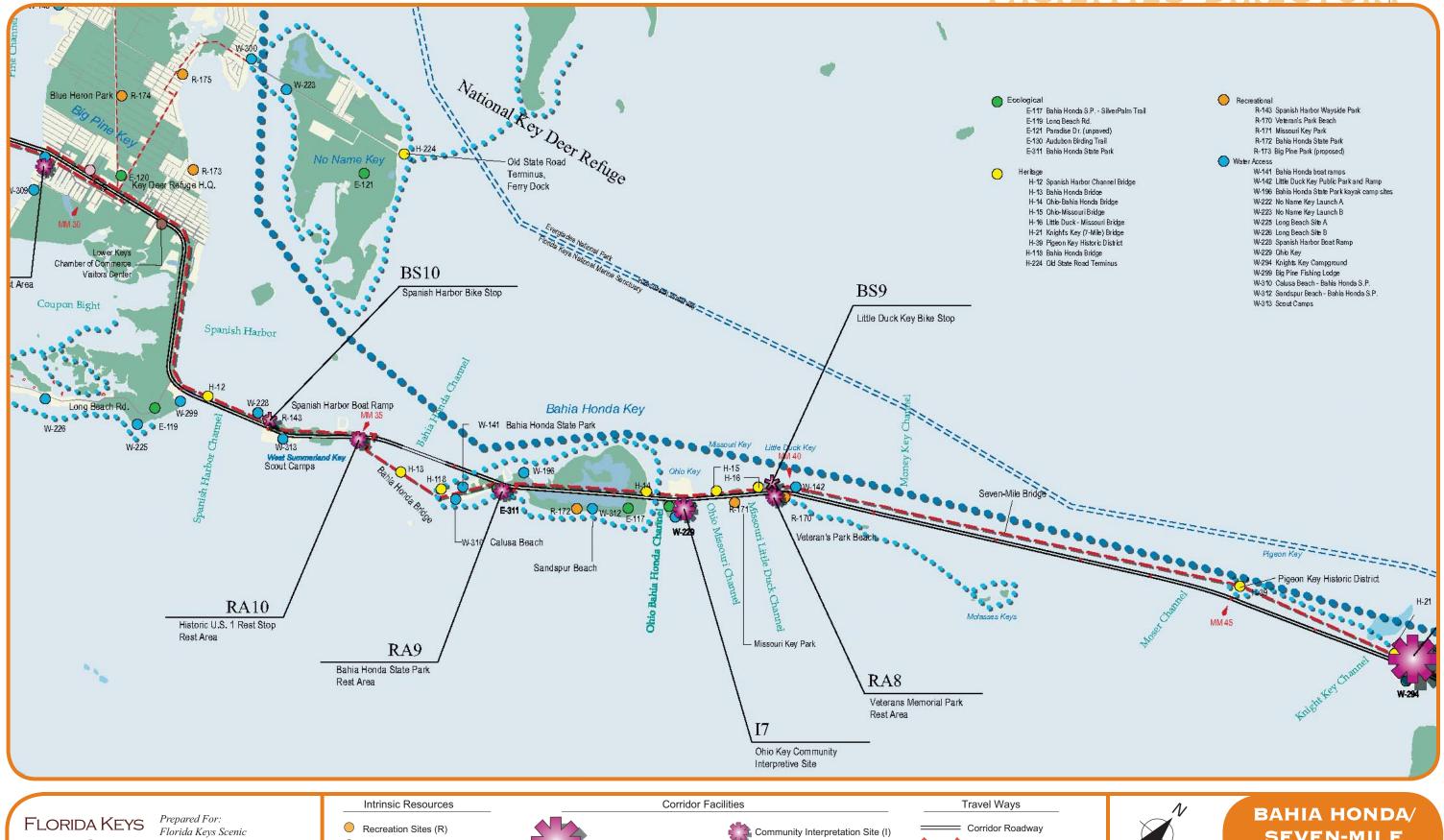




## FACILITIES DIRECTORY



# FACILITIES DIRECTORY



FLORIDA KEYS

Prepared For:
Florida Keys Scenic
Highway Advisory Group

HIGHWAY
NOTES:
Base data provided by Monroe
County GIS and the Florida
Geographic Data Library.

Recreation Sites (R)
Heritage Interpretation Sites (H)
Ecological Interpretation Sites (E)
Water Access Sites (W)
Cultural Arts Sites (C)
Communit

Chamber of Commerce

Corridor Facilities

Community Interpretation Site (I)

Rest Area (RA)

Bike Stop (BS)

Kiosk (K)

Travel Ways

Corridor Roadway

Corridor Bikeway

Community Bikeway

Corridor Kayak Route

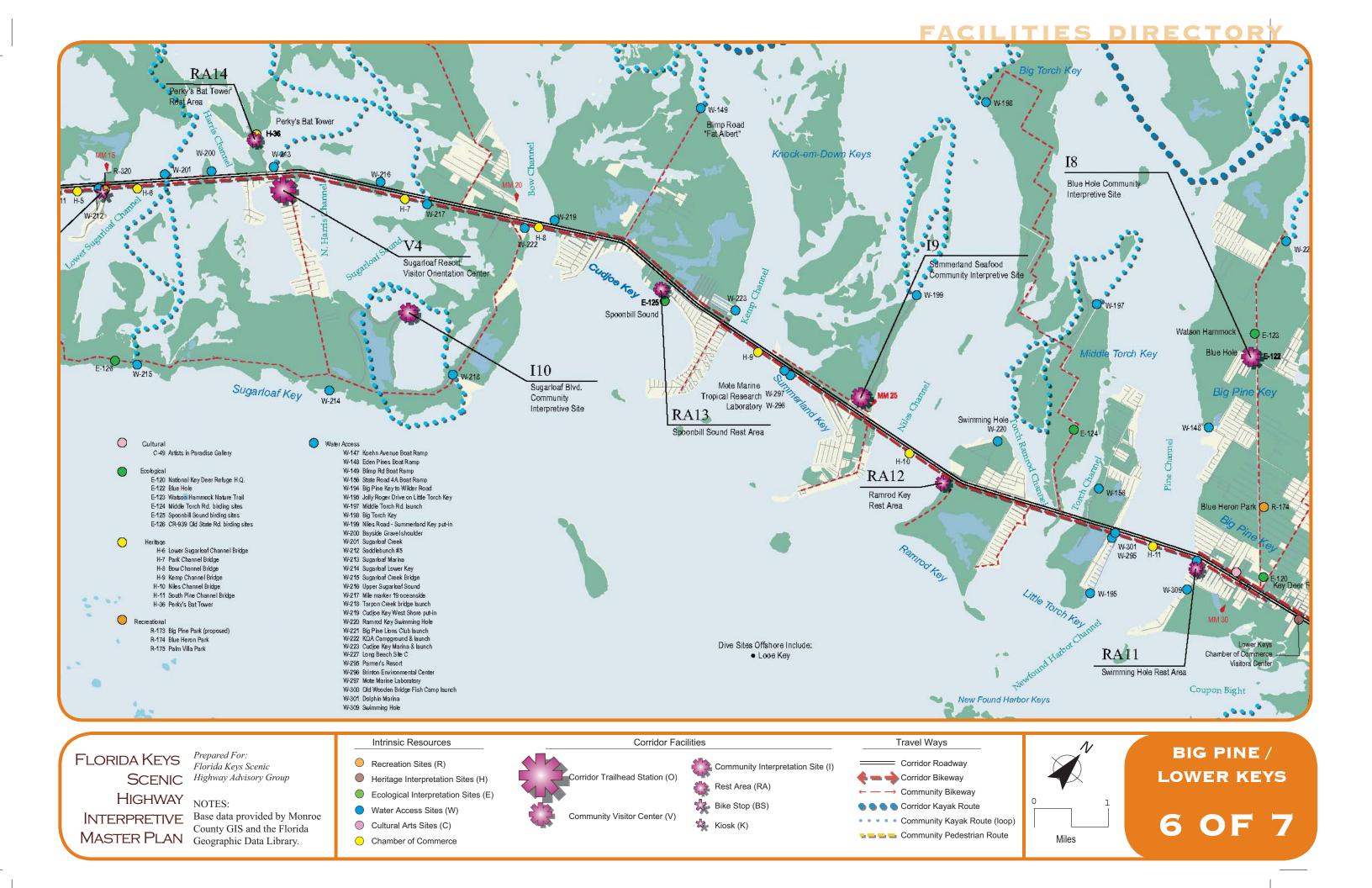
Community Kayak Route (loop)

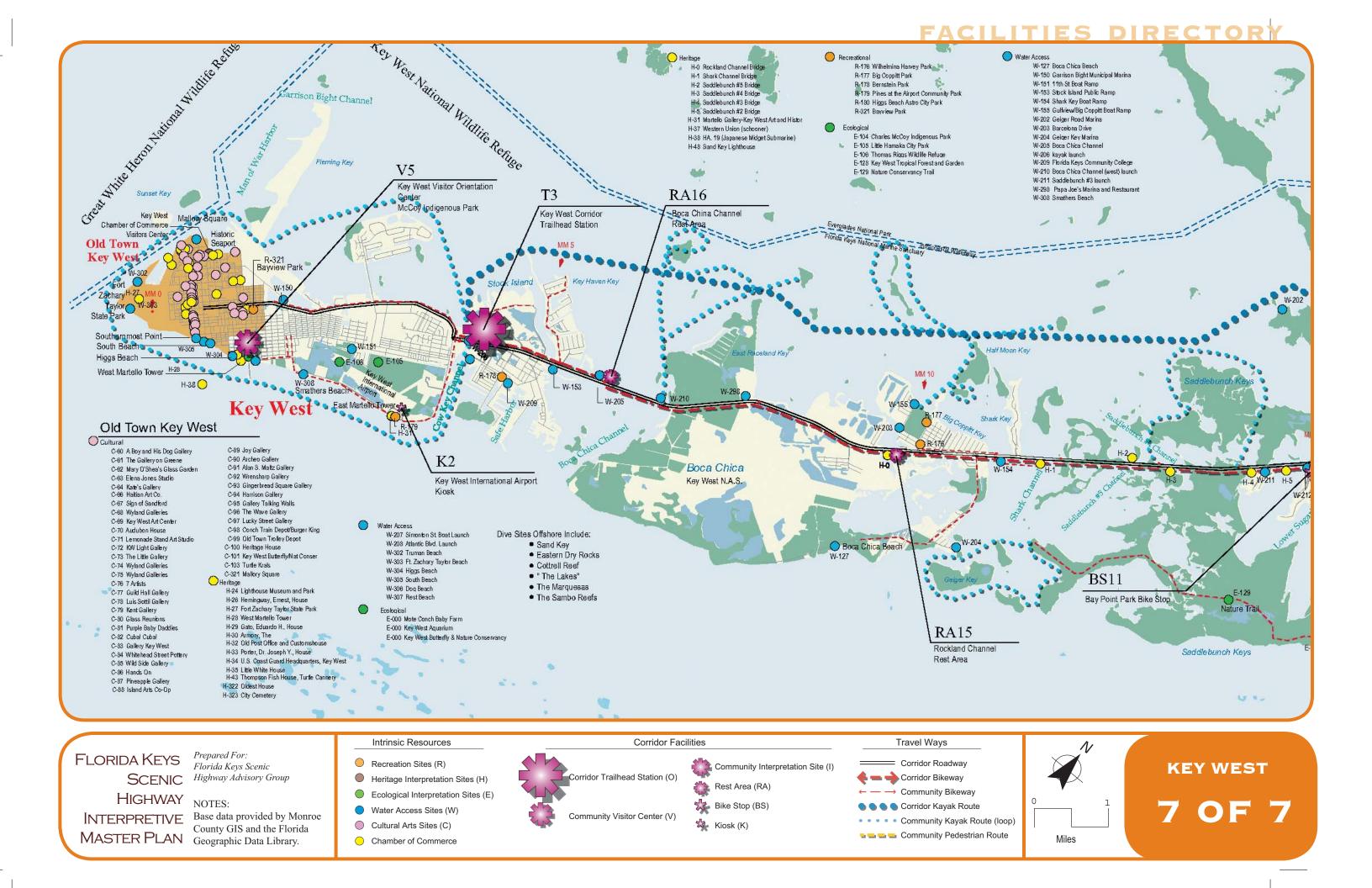
Community Pedestrian Route

0 1 Miles

BAHIA HONDA/ SEVEN-MILE BRIDGE

5 OF 7





## Facilities Directory

## **E.** Community Center Facilities

## **Corridor Trailhead Stations (T)**

## 1. FDEP Property at North Key Largo

The northern trailhead of the Overseas Heritage
Trail is proposed for a site at mile marker 107
already owned by the Department of Environmental
Protection. The shell of an unfinished building exists
on the property and a canal borders one parcel line.
The Division of Greenways and Trails intends to
complete construction of the building to serve as
office space with some downstairs rooms providing
interpretive exhibits and hiking/cycling resources.
Vehicular access to this site will be a challenge,
particularly after the completion of improvements to
the Jewfish Creek bridge. The new elevated approach
ramp will block views to the site. Southbound traffic
entering Key Largo on U.S. 1 will be required to make
a U-turn and follow directional signs to locate this

trailhead. The property is beautiful, having numerous canopy trees, water frontage and backing up to the Crocodile Lake National Wildlife Refuge.

## 2. Knights Key/Pigeon Key

A "midpoint" trailhead for the Overseas Heritage Trail will be the Knights Key area at MM 47, just south of the community of Marathon. This historic point was once the "end of the road", prior to the construction of the overseas railroad's seven-mile bridge. The point is elevated (as it remains an approach to the new highway bridge) and it offers scenic views of sunsets, mangrove islands, and of Pigeon Key – a historic district and former headquarters of the Toll and Bridge Commission. A tram regularly takes visitors out to

Pigeon Key for tours. Though labeled a Trailhead in this plan, the strong heritage themes, including Henry Flagler's railroad and the construction of the first and second Overseas Highway bridges, will mandate the inclusion of interpretive facilities as well. The site has a prominent location just slightly more than midway down the chain of islands at the foot of the seven-mile bridge overlooking Moser Channel. Ample parking exists, and the remains of obsolete restrooms from a U.S. 1 rest stop are a curiosity.

## 3. Key West Tropical Forest and Garden

This botanic gem is located on Stock Island near MM 4. The facility offers visitors many opportunities to view and learn about unique subtropical trees and

shrubs of west-indian origin, many of which are found nowhere else in the United States due to the forest's "frost-free" climate. These amenities mandate it's function as an interpretive site operated on an admission fee basis, but the facility's location very near the southern terminus of the Overseas Heritage Trail make it an ideal Trailhead. The Tropical Forest is currently undergoing an exciting makeover including expansion of land area and construction of new gardens and new facilities. A parcel fronting Cow Key Channel across College Road has even been acquired, thus offering an opportunity to serve as a trailhead for the Overseas Paddling Trail. Plans are underway to construct a Trailhead Station on the garden's property very near U.S. 1 and the Heritage Trail.



FDEP Property at North Key Largo



**Knights Key** 



**Historic Pigeon Key** 



**Key West Tropical Forest & Garden** 

CHAPTER FOUR: THE CORRIDOR FACILITIES PLAN



Dive the reef at John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park



**Green Turtle Hammock Site in Islamorada** 



**Long Key State Park** 



Veterans' Memorial Rest Area on Little Duck Key

## Rest Areas (RA) (16 total) Key Largo

## 1. John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park (fee)

Yes, you could rest here, but why would you want to with so many things to do, to read and to explore? After all, terra firma represents only a fraction of the acreage of this State Park, America's first underwater preserve. Established in 1960 due largely to the efforts of Miami newspaper editor John Pennekamp, the park offers scuba and snorkeling tours of the offshore reefs, kayak rentals, two small swimming beaches, camping, and nature trails through tropical hardwood hammocks. An existing visitors center includes an aquarium showcasing reef inhabitants and a natural history museum.

## Islamorada

## 2. Founders' Park

Founders' Park in Islamorada offers active recreation activities targeted primarily to Islamorada residents.

## 3. Green Turtle Hammock

The Village of Islamorada acquired the Green Turtle Hammock property, offering the opportunity to install a modest rest area with shaded benches and a pathway through the wooded site for passive recreation.

## 4. Anne's Beach Rest Area

This park is dedicated to local environmental activist Anne Eaton and is located south of Islamorada on the southern tip of Matecumbe Key. It has two parking areas connected by an elevated boardwalk through the mangroves. One parking area has restrooms and several picnic shelters are built into the boardwalk system. A shallow swimming beach looks out to the ocean over Channel #2. On beautiful weekends the existing parking is insufficient to meet demand.

## 5. Long Key State Park (fee)

Just south of the town of Layton on Long Key is the entrance to Long Key State Park. The park offers beach-front primitive camping, a picnic area, nature trails and a remote primitive camp site for kayakers. The Spanish referred to the key as "Cayo Vivora" meaning rattlesnake key. It is presumed that this name describes the shape of the key which resembles a snake's head with its jaws open.

## 6. Long Key Bridge Rest Area

This rest area is on the ocean-side of the highway at MM 65.5 overlooking Tom's Harbor Cut. Existing facilities include paved parking and access to the fishing pier on the old bridge. The site is substantially elevated with fill as it is part of the highway ramp up to the bridge. Access to a very small beach area could be provided by constructing a series of ramps and switch-backs.

## Marathon

## 7. Grassy Key Rest Area

Located at MM 55.5, Grassy Key is just north of Marathon and almost across the highway from Curry Hammock State Park. Other nearby attractions include the Dolphin Research Center where visitors can learn about marine mammals and may even be able to swim with the dolphins.

### 8. Veterans' Memorial Rest Area

Veteran's Memorial Park Rest Area is located at MM 40 on Little Duck Key at the south end of the seven-mile bridge. Facilities on this small island include a boat ramp on the bay side and a shallow swimming beach with picnic shelters on the ocean side. As the name implies, this park has been in existence for a long time (part of the first overseas highway) and facilities are in need of a face-lift.







Historic U.S. 1 Rest Area on West Summerland Key



Perky's Bat Tower on Sugarloaf Key



View of the anchorage from Boca Chica Channel

## 9. Bahia Honda State Park (fee)

Any talk of "treasure" in the Keys would be amiss if it failed to mention the beauty and amenities of Bahia Honda State Park at MM 37. The Spanish called this "Deep Bay" and in fact Flagler's engineers found the bridge design for Bahia Honda Channel to be the most difficult and expensive because the channel is so deep and currents swift. Geologically, the channel is very near the boundary between the Key Largo limestone formations to the north and the oolitic limestone formations to the south. It is also the dividing line between Middle and Lower Keys. Bahia Honda State Park offers camping facilities, a marina, and day-use areas but the most spectacular attraction is the naturally occurring sandy beach on the Atlantic side. Conde Naste Traveler voted this the best beach in the Continental US in 1992, though their method of arriving at this decision is unclear. Beach-front campsites, nature trails through Silver Palm hammocks, and a walk out onto the old Bahia Honda bridge structure make this a not-to-be-missed destination.

## **Lower Keys**

## 10. Historic U.S. 1 Rest Area

At the southern foot of the Bahia Honda Bridge on West Summerland Key is an automobile rest area constructed as an amenity for the original Overseas Highway. One author (Jerry Wilkinson, keyshistory.org) has suggested that this location was the site of the dedication of the highway by President Franklin Roosevelt in February of 1939.

## 11. Swimming Hole Rest Area

An undeveloped site exists on the west side of Big Pine Key on the south side of the highway. This property features canals dug in preparation for an ill-fated development project. Today, the canals are used by locals who refer to the site as the "Big Pine Swimming Hole". The property has been acquired by Wildlife & Fisheries for habitat restoration purposes. Primitive rest area facilities could be developed on this site. Access from south-bound U.S. 1 traffic is problematic.

## 12.Ramrod Key Rest Area

The Ramrod Key Rest Area will be on the east side of Niles Channel on the south side of the highway where it can also serve the Heritage Trail. The key is named for a ship which ran aground on the reefs offshore. Also offshore is Looe Key, a popular dive site, which is not really a "key" at all but rather a coral outcropping.

## 13. Spoonbill Sound Rest Area

On the ocean side of Cudjoe Key is Spoonbill Sound, an important nesting area for the Roseate Spoonbill and other shorebirds. Two parcels of land at the terminus of a side street are available for purchase by the County for development as an interpretive site. This location is adjacent to a section of residential development, outside the eastern boundary of the preserve. Ecologically sensitive design techniques should be employed to allow visitors to view the shoreline, the mud flats, and its avian inhabitants. This is an opportunity to educate the public about the importance of habitat conservation.

## 14.Perky's Bat Tower Rest Area

Because it isn't visible from the highway, many visitors to the Keys overlook the bat tower; real estate baron Rictor Perky's attempt at mosquito control. The wooden tower is one of those unique and quirky landmarks that adds a unique "sense of place" to the Keys and tells the story of the early pioneers, developers, and land speculators who attempted to conquer a harsh environment and profit from it. The currently vacant site once had a fish camp, a restaurant, and a casino – all of which burned. It is adjacent to the Sugarloaf Lodge, an aging waterfront resort that has a small airstrip opposite the bat tower.

## 15. Rockland Channel Rest Area

The Rockland Channel Bridge at MM 9.5 offers an area with sufficient right-of-way to provide a rest area for motorists. The site offers sweeping views of the channel and of Boca Chica key. It could also offer directions to guide visitors to nearby sites of interest such as Boca Chica Beach or Big Coppit boat ramp.

## 16.Boca Chica Channel Rest Area

Boca Chica Key is home to the largest naval air station in south Florida. A rest area is proposed at MM 6 on the west side of the Boca Chica Channel bridge. This area is popular with fishermen and windsurfers alike. A rest area only two miles from the final destination of Key West is unlikely to be heavily used by tourists, except for those wanting to take in the scenic views or go fishing from the old bridge.



Harry Harris Park on Key Largo



**Tavernier Creek - birds eye view** 



Pilings of the never completed Veterans Memorial bridge on Lower Matecumbe Key bayside.



**Dolphin Research Center parking lot** 

## Bike Stops (BS) (11)

## **Key Largo**

## 1. Sunset Point Park

This bayside park on Key Largo offers beautiful views of Florida Bay and the evening sunsets. Present facilities on this one acre park include a single-lane boat ramp, a canoe/kayak launch, and picnic tables.

## 2. Harry Harris Park

Locally referred to as "Tavernier Beach", the Harry Harris park facility near MM 94 on Key Largo faces the ocean. A small, protected (by rock breakwaters) swimming beach and boat ramp are the main attractions, but the park also has ball courts, a playground, covered picnic tables, and a ballfield. Access to the park is via several neighborhood streets off of U.S. 1. This park is intended primarily for use by residents, and access on weekends and holidays is limited to locals.

## 3. Old Settler's Park

Tavernier's Old Settler's Park is a passive park on the ocean side of U.S. 1 offering picnic shelters, a jogging trail, a tot lot, and a butterfly garden on three acres of land.

## 4. Tavernier Creek Bike Stop

The historic district in Tavernier is the oldest remaining settlement in the Upper Keys. It is on the south end of Key Largo Key. The bike stop location is proposed on the north side of the highway overlooking scenic Tavernier Creek. This site is surrounded by an ecological preserve.

## Islamorada

## **5. Matecumbe Bight Bike Stop** MM 76.5

## 6. Channel #2 Bike Stop

The pilings of a never completed bridge spans a portion of Channel #2 between Lower Matecumbe and Craig Key. Anne's Beach is across the highway. Near the bike stop location is a fishing pier and views to Craig Key which features a mansion built by the Twitchell family. Ms. Twitchell was heiress of the A&P fortune and she and her husband were the original owners of Cheeca Lodge.

## 7. Layton Bike Stop

The tiny town of Layton on Long Key is almost entirely surrounded by the State Park lands. The bike stop location is near the Layton Nature Trail on the bayside of the highway.

## Marathon

## 8. Dolphin Research Center Bike Stop

The Dolphin Research Center is located on Grassy Key just north of the Marathon community. The non-profit facility provides marine mammal rehabilitation services, and also shows with both dolphins and California sea lions. Swim with the dolphins encounters are also available to visitors.

## 9. Little Duck Key Bike Stop

This bike stop is proposed for the bayside of Little Duck Key, across from Veteran's Memorial Park.

## **Lower Kevs**

## 10. Spanish Harbor Bike Stop

This site on the western tip of West Summerland Key overlooks scenic Spanish Harbor and Big Pine Key beyond. Fishing, walking and sightseeing are favorite activities here. As the name implies, the protected, deep harbor was favored by Spanish explorers and other mariners.

## 11. Baypoint Park Bike Stop

This neighborhood park on Saddlebunch Keys at MM 15 offers basketball and tennis courts, sand volleyball, a soccer field, lawn bowling, a playground, and picnic tables. It sits on 1.5 acres of land on the Oceanside of the highway.







Islamorada "Caboose Site" Visitor Center



**Crane Point Hammock in Marathon** 



Sonny McCoy Indigenous Park on Key West

## **Visitor Orientation Centers (V)**

## 1. Key Largo Visitor Orientation Center

The Key Largo Chamber of Commerce at MM 106 has been selected as the Visitor Orientation Center for the Key Largo community. This facility will have an especially prominent role in providing information to Keys visitors because it is strategically located on the southbound side of the highway just a mile after motorists "make landfall" onto Key Largo. A partnership will be forged with the Chamber of Commerce to allow the development of display space for interpretive information describing the ecology, heritage and culture of the Key Largo Community and the Florida Keys in general – without the influence of commercial advertisements.

## 2. Islamorada Visitor Orientation Center

## - Caboose Site

"The Caboose" at MM 82.6 bayside has been selected as the site for a Visitor Orientation Center serving the Islamorada community. This 0.6 acre site is under a 30-year lease to Monroe County and already offers an outdoor interpretive display area to visitors in addition to the historic caboose. The opportunity to construct a visitors center facility

on this site—capitalizing on existing railroad, rock grotto and forest canopy amenities—must not be missed. The center will inform and direct visitors to ecological sites including Windley Key, Lignumvitae Key, and Anne's Beach; to heritage sites including Indian Key, Veteran's bridge piers, and the Hurricane Monument; and to cultural attractions including the Whale Harbor resorts and the artist colony on Plantation Key.

## 3. Marathon Visitor Orientation Center – Museum and Nature Center of Crane Point

This 63 acre site contains the historic Adderly House constructed in the typical Bahamian style, the more recent Crane house mansion, a museum of natural history, a children's museum with outdoor interactives, and the Wild Bird Rescue Center of Marathon. Visitors may walk along over a mile of nature trails winding through ecosystems including tropical hardwood hammocks, mangroves, and tidal lagoons. The interpretation at this venue will entail the ecology, heritage and culture pertaining to the Marathon community.

## 4. Lower Keys Visitor Orientation Center – Corner of US 1 and Sugarloaf Blvd.

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection is seeking to acquire a parcel of land on Sugarloaf Key. It is recommended that a community visitor center be constructed at this site having the means of showcasing the unique environment, heritage, and culture of the Lower Keys. Land is at a premium throughout the Keys, and on Big Pine and the Lower Keys preservation and restoration of natural habitats are of utmost importance. The ecological habitats of the Lower Keys are markedly different from those of the Upper Keys and publicly accessible sites interpreting these habitats are rare south of Big Pine. This site should be clearly visible to passing motorists and could provide educational and directional information to visitors desiring to see and experience the "real Florida" of the Lower Keys at nearby interpretive sites and cultural attractions.

## 5. Key West Visitor Orientation Center - McCoy Indigenous Park

Located on the south side of Key West, across the street from the West Martello Tower, is the Charles "Sonny" McCoy Indigenous Park; featuring a small forest of tropical trees and shrubs. A mecca for birders during both spring and fall migration seasons, this shady oasis of native tropical plants is one of very few densely vegetated places left on the island. Local specialties include the White Crowned Pigeon (which is also seen at the previously described Tropical Forest & Garden.) The park already offers a visitors center and parking area as well as adjacent recreational facilities. The interpretation at this venue will emphasize the ecology, culture and heritage of Key West.







**Sandy Sprunt Dove Creek Preserve** 



**Windley Key State Geologic Site** 



**Indian Key Fill** 

## **Community Outdoor Interpretive Sites (I)**

Interpretive Sites are locations where visitors wanting to experience "the real Florida" can get out of their car and both read about and see first-hand the relevant artifacts, settlements, architecture, plant communities, wildlife, and marine ecology of the Florida Keys. They differ from visitor centers in than development is kept to a minimum – no buildings aside from restrooms where those facilities are deemed necessary. Most Outdoor Interpretive Sites will have a small parking area for a few cars, an orientation/educational kiosk conveying information about the site, and a pathway/boardwalk system leading into and through the landscape. Benches, a waste receptacle and similar amenities may be included as appropriate.

## **Key Largo**

## 1. Rock Harbor

The settlement of Rock Harbor on Key Largo Key was the original name of the City of Key Largo – renamed in honor of the famous Humphry Bogart movie filmed almost entirely in Hollywood. Before the railroad, Rock Harbor centered upon an agrarian economy of pineapple plantations. Freshwater wells (rare in the Keys) were available nearby allowing this community to prosper. It derives it's name from the "rocky" line of reefs just offshore which posed a hazard to shipping, yet offered safe anchorage to vessels small enough to

navigate through. This outdoor interpretive site should be developed to focus on the pioneer heritage of the key, with reference to the families who homesteaded and built their livelihood here, and how their industry was decimated by the very railroad they had hoped would improve it.

## 2. Sandy Sprunt Dove Creek Preserve

Alexander "Sandy" Sprunt, IV is a retired National Research Director with the National Audubon Society where he worked at the Tavernier Research facility. It is through his (and like-minded supporters) efforts that this ocean-side parcel has been acquired by FDEP and is available for limited public access for environmental education purposes. Interpretive themes at this site will focus on the ecological transect from tropical hardwood hammock to red mangrove thickets along the shoreline. Songbird migration, local avian specialties including the White Crowned Pigeon, and the history and current "best practices" for habitat conservation will be interpreted to visitors.

## Islamorada

## 3. Windley Key State Geological Site

Windley Key, originally among the highest of the islands in elevation, became a quarry during the construction of the Overseas Railroad. Initially, the coral rock was used as fill in the construction of the rail bed. Later, the aesthetic quality of the "keystone" was discovered when it was carefully sliced and polished. Slabs were mined from the quarries and shipped to finishing mills in Miami where they were smoothly polished and cut to size. This attractive, durable material has been used to finish many buildings in Miami and other south Florida cities. The quarry work left behind deep pits on Windley Key. Those on the ocean-side of U.S. 1 were developed into a marine attraction called Theater of the Sea which opened it's doors in 1946. The quarry pits on the north side of U.S. 1 were acquired more recently by Florida State Parks and has been nicely developed as an interpretive site showcasing the geologic prehistory of the Keys and the history of the quarries, Flagler's railroad, technologies involved in both operations, and the culture of the settlers and laborers who were employed in these operations.

## 4. Indian Key Fill

Indian Key Fill is a causeway of fill material extending into Indian Key Channel. This segment of roadway offers some of the most scenic views in the Upper and Middle Keys including the offshore State Parks of Lignumvitae Key Botanic Site, Indian Key Historic Site, and the San Pedro Aquatic Preserve. This location offers a wealth of historical and cultural interpretive topics including the lives and accomplishments of Jacob Housman, Dr. Henry Perrine, the Spanish Treasure Fleets, the wrecking industry and maritime trade, and the Matheson's estate (circa 1919) on Lignumvitae. Because the scenic vistas easily lend themselves to inspiring the imagination, interpretive exhibits should concentrate on maritime themes including Spanish exploration (and exploitation) not only of this region but of Central and South America.







Ohio (Sunshine) Key



Blue Hole on Big Pine Key



**Summerland Seafood on Summerland Key** 

## Marathon

## 5. Curry Hammock State Park

Curry Hammock is a relatively recent addition to the Florida State Parks system in the Keys. Located on Little Crawl Key at MM 56.2, the park offers recreational opportunities including a swimming beach, picnic areas, a playground, and other amenities. The unencumbered views of the sky make Curry Hammock a popular location for birders to gather during the annual hawk watch festivities when counts of migratory raptors are made. Other portions of the park are forested with tropical hardwoods and include an especially dense population of the Florida Thatch Palm. Walking trails provide visitors access to these habitats. The park is a node on the Paddling Trail. The interpretive exhibits at this site should focus on the terrestrial and especially the marine ecology of the Middle Keys region.

## 6. Ohio Key

Ohio Key (aka Sunshine Key) at MM 39 is just east of Bahia Honda Key State Park. The island is split by the highway and the northern half is extensively developed as the Sunshine Trailer Park Resort. Fortunately, the southern half, including a salt pond, has been preserved and is under the management of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This area, featuring a dirt path through a tropical hammock forest leading past the edge of the pond to the "beach" is of interest birders and other nature enthusiasts. It is regularly used by resort residents who walk across the highway to escape their asphalt and aluminum "jungle". An unimproved parking area exists on the south side of U.S. 1. An interpretive kiosk and trail system at this site would both serve to educate the public about the fragile ecosystems, and wildlife of the region and could aide in protecting these resources through restricted access design. Due to one's isolation when walking down the nature trail, interpretive themes at this site should focus on the effects of climate, winds, solar radiation and even tides.

## **Lower Keys**

## 7. Blue Hole

The Blue Hole is a freshwater "marsh" environment not commonly occurring in the Keys. It is located on Big Pine Key, three miles north of the Scenic Highway off of Key Deer Boulevard. The "hole" is the remains of a quarry, since filled with fresh water derived from rainfall. It is surrounded by pine flatwoods, from whence Big Pine Key derives it's name. These lands, part of Watson Hammock and protected under the National Key Deer Refuge, are not available for further facility development. However, it is appropriate to upgrade and enhance the existing interpretive kiosks and trail to provide additional educational information and to further protect the natural resources from disturbance by unwitting visitors. The Blue Hole Interpretive Site, along with connecting hiking trails and surrounding woodlands, offers an opportunity for eco-tourists to escape development and to immerse themselves in a habitat unique to the Lower Keys. Maybe they'll even spot a key deer!

## 8. Summerland Seafood

Interpretation of the cultural heritage of the Florida Keys is a challenge from a public funding perspective because creative partnerships must be forged to develop and enhance privately owned properties. The Summerland Seafood establishment on the north side of the Scenic Highway on Summerland Key at MM 25 is an operating fish market and restaurant. The rear of the buildings are loading docks on a canal where the day's catch is off-loaded from the boats. An opportunity exists here because a wide rightof-way including a frontage road (the old highway alignment) remains. A public interpretive kiosk should be developed within this public right-of-way which interprets the fishing and marine industries which seem to be rapidly disappearing from the Keys and from Florida in general.



**Sugarloaf Boulevard Site** 



The Shipwreck Historeum on Key West is representative of the many privately operated interpretive venues available.

## 9. Sugarloaf Boulevard

Sugarloaf Key is rich with history of entrepreneurs and resorts, yet much of this and surrounding keys remain undeveloped – primarily due to the low elevation of much of the land area. Rictor Perkey built a fishing camp, restaurant and casino here. It burned, but a wooden bat tower remains as a curious edifice to his attempt to control the mosquitoes. Nearby is Sugarloaf Lodge, formerly the home of "Sugar" the dolphin. Across the highway, at the intersection with Sugarloaf Boulevard is a parcel of publicly owned land appropriate for the construction of an interpretive site. This kiosk and signage installment will describe the nineteenth century heritage of the key, and it would also give directions to a scenic drive down Sugarloaf Boulevard and turning onto the route of the old highway hugging the ocean side of Sugarloaf Key. Views to the interior of the key, over Sugarloaf Sound, evoke the isolation and "wilderness" aspect of this landscape. Because so few physical remains of native American culture exist on the Keys for interpretation, it is felt that this remote area is appropriate for a kiosk exhibit introducing their lifestyles, culture, and means of survival in this harsh environment.

## **Key West**

The entire Old Town district of Key West, along with parks and historic landmarks along the Atlantic Ocean side, offer innumerable interpretive experiences for visitors to learn about the culture, heritage, and ecology of the Keys and their surrounding waters. For this reason, and with the understanding that real estate is at a premium, no additional publicly-funded interpretive facilities are proposed for Key West.

## FACILITIES DIRECTORY

## THE INTERPRETIVE PLAN



## CHAPTER FIVE

## CHAPTER FIVE INTERPRETIVE PLAN

## A. Overview of the Interpretive System

The Interpretive Plan is designed around a three-tiered interpretive structure. Visitors to the Keys will be treated to three distinctly different interpretive opportunities:

## **Level 1 Interpretation:**

The first level of interpretation will be the *Story of the Keys Landscape* This level tells the biophysical and cultural Story of the Keys from the geologic origin of the peninsula and archipelago, and the resulting marine and terrestrial ecosystems through pre-historic and historic settlement to present day conditions of critical State concern. The *Story of the Keys Landscape* will be told through:

- 1. An exhibition at each of the five Community Visitor Centers (the same exhibition will be repeated in each Community Visitor Center).
- 2. Podcasts and CD's for use while traveling by car, bike or kayak.



Reef fish - their story is part of the Interpretive Content.



**Ecology** 



Heritage



Culture

## **Level 2 Interpretation:**

The second level of interpretation is the community-specific level. A series of important facts and interesting stories (such as pineapple farming, cigar factories, Jimmy Buffett, the role of coral reefs in healthy marine ecosystems, or the Key Largo movie) will be presented in each of the five communities in the archipelago. These fun facts and stories will be told "on-location" in each community and Community Visitor Orientation Center. Community interpretation will be told through:

- 1. In-depth exploration of topics related to that community's heritage, history, and ecology presented in an exhibition at each of the five Community Visitor Orientation Centers.
- 2. Major local stories will be told at the Community Interpretive Sites two are planned in each of the five communities for a total of ten stories.
- 3. In addition, the Community Interpretive Sites will also provide information on other interesting and localized facts and tidbits visitors might see at that site.



**Community Specific Interpretation** 

## **Level 3 Interpretation**

The third level of interpretation is that of the existing intrinsic resources throughout the Keys. This level of interpretation embraces all of the existing museums, parks, historic centers, and environmental / heritage organizations that currently exist along the corridor. The scenic highway program will provide trip-planning access to these important existing amenities, through:

- 1. Eco-tourism directories located on-line, at the Community Visitor Centers and at Trailhead Stations. These will be supplemented by audio-tours, podcasts, and brochures about existing public and private interpretive venues.
- 2. Collaborations with community organizations including festivals, fairs, geocaching, competitions, presentations, tournaments, and other events organized in each community.



**Existing Intrinsic Resources** 









The Interpretive experiences are organized around the two major visitation patterns: the Community-Based Experience and the Total Length Experience. Each of these two tracks will have mode-specific interpretive systems.



## A. Community Based Experience

- 1. Community Visitor Orientation Centers
  - Overall Story of the Keys Landscape.
  - Local community heritage highlights and anecdotes.
- 2. Community Interpretive Sites
  - In-depth exploration of 10 sub-topics (2 per community).
  - Site specific interpretation.
- 3. Existing Interpretive Venues
- Directory and exploration of existing public and private interpretive venues.
- Community organizations outreach and events.

## **B.** Total Length Experience:

- 1. Auto / Bus
- Trailhead and Internet orientation to determine which interpretive sites to visit.
- Car radio station audio keyed to GPS to tell the over all *Story of the Keys Landscape* and podcasts.
- Community Visitor Orientation Centers to showcase the overall *Story of the Keys Landscape* exhibit.
- Community Visitor Orientation center and the community interpretation sites to tell the community oriented stories.
- Existing interpretive facilities and organizations to provide the topic-specific experience.
- 2. Bicycle and Kayak Experience
- Trailhead and Internet orientation to determine which interpretive sites to visit.
- Car radio station audio keyed to GPS to tell the over all *Story of the Keys Landscape*, and podcasts.
- Community Visitor Orientation Centers to showcase the overall *Story of the Keys Landscape* exhibit.
- Community Visitor Orientation center and the community interpretation sites to tell the community oriented stories.
- Existing interpretive facilities and organizations to provide the topic-specific experience.

## B. Overview of the Interpretive Content

At the heart of this project is the task to produce a logical and intuitive system for interpreting "intrinsic resources" occurring in the Florida Keys. It is an objective of this plan to produce a "counter-cultural" system for exploring the Keys. Rather than focus on mainstream tourist attractions which already receive enough attention, this plan will focus on the places, people, and events which may be less widely known but are often as interesting as their more publicized counterparts. The overall theme for interpretation will be the story of the landscape. This is the story of the bio-physical evolution of the natural landscape and how this landscape was the basis for human settlement and enterprise. This overall theme is further developed through the three major "ribbons" of interpretation: **Ecology**, **Heritage**, **Culture**.

This chapter begins with an overview description of the major interpretive topics for each of the three subthemes: ecology, heritage, and culture. Next, a description of *The Story of Keys Landscape* is presented. Finally, the chapter ends with a detailed description of each proposed interpretive facility and its content.

The location of each community interpretive site is listed followed by a color coded title for the "ribbon of interpretation" to be addressed. Green for ecology, yellow for heritage, and pink for culture. The Visitor Orientation Centers address a topic from each of the ribbons appropriate for the local community, while the Community Interpretive Sites focus on one or two of the themes.







CHAPTER FIVE: INTERPRETIVE PLAN

## **Ecology**

The natural environment is a primary draw for visitors to the Florida Keys. Fishing, SCUBA diving, snorkeling, kayaking, birding, hiking, camping and beachcombing are all eco-tourism activities enjoyed by tourists and residents alike. Many residents obtain their livelihood directly from one or more of these activities. The ecological interpretive ribbon will help visitors to understand the natural processes that make the Keys such a unique and attractive region. The ecological interpretive ribbon will help visitors to understand the natural processes that make the Keys such a unique and attractive region. Themes for ecology interpretation are organized into the subcategories of Natural Processes, Significant Sites, and Events.

## A - NATURAL PROCESSES

## 1. Geologic History

Most of earth's landforms are a result of volcanic activity, but Florida's Keys are different. These islands are a direct result of the actions of living organisms. The exposed rock of the Upper Keys was formed by ancient coral reefs. The Lower Keys are also coral reefs overlaid with oolitic limestone – a sediment formed by algae. Over time, and in conjunction with dramatic fluctuations in sea level, oolitic sediments were deposited and compressed to form rock.

## 2. Weather and Climate

Commonly regarded as a "tropical paradise" (though they are not truly in the tropics), the Florida Keys indeed offer a climate which is attractive during much of the year and is found nowhere else in the continental United States. The climate supports West Indian vegetation common in other areas of the Caribbean, Central and South America. The intense summer heat, strong rays of the sun, and occasional tropical storms are detractors to this image of paradise, but are none-the-less an integral part of the landscape. Hurricanes have shaped the islands for millennia, and are part of the local lore. A substantial annual rainfall gradient exists between Key Largo and Key West, with Key West being far dryer on average.

## 3. Hydrography

As an island chain, the surrounding waters are intimately related to an experience of the Florida Keys. On a calm day the visitor may assume that the sea is static and unchanging, but locals and mariners know this is far from the case. The Keys are bound by two separate water bodies with very different characteristics. On the north side is Florida Bay, a shallow area that gives way to the open waters of the Gulf of Mexico in the Lower Keys. On the south side of the archipelago is the Florida Straits, through which flows waters exiting the Gulf of Mexico into the Atlantic Ocean. As the water is constrained through the Florida Straits, it picks up speed forming the Gulf Stream – the mighty ocean current that carries these warm waters up the Eastern seaboard and across the Atlantic. The flow of salt water, the impact of fresh water from the Everglades, water temperature, salinity and tides vary with the season, with phases of the moon, and from one end of the Keys to the other. These forces played a leading role in shaping the islands, and have challenged mans attempts to settle them.

## 4. Hydrology

In contrast to the hydrography, the hydrology of the Florida Keys refers to the availability of fresh water both at the surface and below ground. Practically speaking, much of the Florida Keys is a desert with very few naturally occurring sources of fresh water. Those that did occur were of great importance to early mariners and settlers of the Keys. Freshwater lenses occur most frequently in the lower keys due to the layer of Miami Oolite which is porous and retains the rainfall. The less dense freshwater rests atop underlying saltwater and is therefore called a "lens" due to its elliptical shape. The less porous Key Largo limestone of the upper keys does not tend to allow these lenses to form. Deep beneath the Keys – and the south Florida mainland – are aquifers. Deepest is the Floridan aquifer which is recharged by rainfall in central Florida. Above it, at the southern tip of the state, is the Biscayne aquifer. In the Keys, the water of both of these aquifers is non-potable due to salt water intrusion. Therefore, construction of an aqueduct was necessary to bring fresh water from the mainland and distribute it throughout the Keys. Water conservation is of utmost importance in the Florida Keys and throughout south Florida.









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## 5. Surficial Geology and Soil Formation

An understanding of the unique soil types comprising the Keys is vital to appreciating the area's ecology. This island chain is distinguished from others in continental North America in that it is formed by the action of living organisms. Both the Key Largo limestone of the Upper and Middle Keys, and the Miami Oolite of the Lower Keys are by products of the actions of living creatures over the millennia. Key Largo limestone is the remains of ancient coral reefs which grew during a time when sea level was higher than it is today. Miami Oolite is formed by algae which chemically extract calcium carbonate from the water and deposit it as tiny grains – ooids – on the sea floor. These grains have been collected and deposited by ocean currents atop the ancient reefs of the Lower Keys and, following a process of compression and solidification, formed the surface rock of the Lower Keys.

## **6. Ecological Habitats**

Due to their unique combination of sub-tropical climate, proximity to the North American mainland, and maritime influences, the Florida Keys boast a tremendous diversity of flora and fauna. Numerous species exist nowhere else and others are listed as threatened or endangered species. Variations in soil types, elevation, rainfall amounts, and proximity to the coastline all affect the type and diversity of species. Some shorelines offer beach and dune communities, though most are mangroves or salt marshes. Inland are tropical hardwood hammocks, pinelands, freshwater wetlands, grasslands and other vegetative communities. Each of these offer their own unique opportunity for exploration and are home to unique animals, birds, reptiles and insects. Whether explored by bike, by foot, or by canoe or kayak, the scenic habitats of the Keys offer numerous opportunities for eco-tourism.

## 7. Marine Habitats

For many visitors the offshore coral reefs are the primary attraction of the Florida Keys. These reefs lie along the northern edge of their geographic range. Successful growth requires warm, clear water with sufficient sunlight. The Florida Current constantly sweeps past the outlier reef systems constantly refreshing them with clear, warm waters. Much of the Keys ecology is based directly or indirectly upon these reef systems. Even the bountiful saltwater fishing opportunities are due to the presence of the reefs which provide habitat, food and shelter for the schools of game fish or the smaller species upon which they feed.

## **B - SIGNIFICANT SITES**

- 1. Windley Key Quarry- Geologic section
- 2. Seven-mile Cut Geological division
- 3. Key Deer National Wildlife Refuge
- 4. Upper Key Largo Tropical Hardwood Hammocks
- 5. Big Pine Key diversity
- 6. Crocodile Lake Sanctuary
- 7. Coral reefs
- 8. Lignum Vitae Key

## C - EVENTS

- 1. Use of high ground (coral) for road building
- 2. Hurricanes & Tropical Storms
- 3. Hardwood deforestation for pineapples, charcoaling
- 4. Soil loss to hurricanes and agriculture
- 5. John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park
- 6. Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary







## Heritage

The heritage of the Keys includes the events, locations, structures, and persons who shaped the islands into what they are today. An interpretive discussion of the Keys' heritage begins with the patterns in history that shaped the development of the Keys.

## **A - CHRONOLOGY**

## 1. Native Cultures Settlement Pre-history

Any evidence of the earliest pre-historic presence in the Keys is long gone, as waters rose to cover the land on the Gulf side of the Peninsula. Even for the Keys as we know them today, there is also little information about the more recent pre-historic presence. Based on carbon dating, the earliest confirmed archaeological site occupied dates to 1000 BC. We assume inhabitants were hunter-gatherers who lived in huts, primarily used shells as tools, and did not practice agriculture. Staple foods included fish, turtle, lobster, shellfish, seals, manatee, deer, raccoon, sea grapes, palm berries, and cocoplums. They lived in small groups, each under leadership of a chief. Boating was a major part of the culture – the Native Americans used dugout canoes to gather seafood and to travel throughout the Keys, and probably throughout Florida. The landscape provided their sustenance.

## 2. Exploration and Settlement

Exploration and settlement of the Florida Keys by Europeans happened almost by accident as a response to the impact of tropical weather upon sailing vessels plying the trade routes of the day. Havana Cuba was the trans-shipment and provisioning hub of the Caribbean basin and vessels departing her ports were headed back to Spain or other countries across the Atlantic – not to the desolate and dangerous Keys. Occasionally, misguided or storm tossed ships would run aground on the outlier reefs, spilling their cargoes and causing loss of life. Some of the first European settlements on the Keys were started by wreckers, intent on being the first to arrive on the scene of a broken treasure galleon so that they could profit from the recovery of the cargo. Other factors of settlement included fish, climate, water, and reefs.

Other early European settlements in the Keys were by Bahamians who were reaping the natural bounty of the waters and land in their pursuits of fishing, turtling, sponging, and timber harvesting. Certainly, these hardy peoples were opportunistic and would engage in hunting and fishing activities as they awaited the next shipwreck. Their settlements were most often seasonal, as these hunter-gatherers would return to their homes with their catch to sell and support their families.

## 3. The 1800's

The 1800's brought permanent European settlement to the Keys. Wrecking continued to drive the economy, eventually causing the town of Key West to grow into the wealthiest city in the Florida Territory. Between shipwreck salvage jobs, the residents engaged in other maritime and agricultural pursuits including fishing, turtling, sponging, pineapple farming, salt making, charcoal manufacture, and other pursuits. A military presence was established in Key West in an attempt to curtail piracy. Civil unrest in nearby Cuba led to the establishment of cigar manufacturing. Still, survival was difficult and was hampered by the scarcity of fresh water, the voracious swarms of mosquitoes, and the ominous storms of hurricane season.

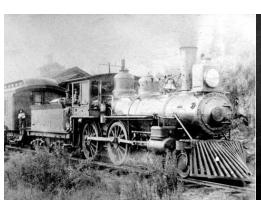
## 4. The Early 1900's

The early 1900's brought some of the first conveniences of modern civilization to the Florida Keys. Petroleum tycoon Henry Flagler overcame monumental obstacles to construct the Overseas Railroad linking Florida's east coast with Key West. The advent of World War I caused the build-up of military installations, particularly in Boca Chica and Key West. The influx of personnel, ships and artillery necessitated the construction of an aqueduct and vehicular roadway from the mainland. The Overseas Railroad was a monumental undertaking, plagued by many mishaps. Frequent hurricanes destroyed years of work, and the lives of may railroad workers were lost before the railway was finally completed in 1912. Mr. Flagler realized his dream before his death. The massive hurricane of 1935 finally put an end to the Overseas Railroad, destroying miles of track and bridge, and reshaping some keys forever. All was not lost, however, and much of the Overseas Highway was constructed atop the remains of the railroad bridges. The introduction of transportation routes – first by rail and then by automobile – enabled the then economically decimated towns and hamlets of the Keys to recover by switching to a touristbased economy. Resorts were constructed and visitors were attracted to the mild weather, the superior fishing, and the social outlets available to them in the remote and somewhat lawless frontier of the Keys.











CHAPTER FIVE: INTERPRETIVE PLAN

## **5. Recent Times**

During the mid and late 1900's, the romantic attraction of the Florida Keys has been both a blessing and a curse. A blessing in that the tourism-driven economy has revived the Keys, but a curse in that over-development has threatened to eradicate the very resources – natural and historic – to which visitors are attracted. Recent times have seen a real estate boom in the Keys. Like many parts of the state and country, the Keys continue to be pressured by development, but far-sighted individuals have succeeded in convincing the Federal and State governments to obtain and set aside lands and waters as protected areas for wildlife and also as outdoor recreation areas for visitors. The Keys contain three State Parks, four National Wildlife Refuges, and numerous acres acquired by non-profit agencies such as The Florida Keys Land and Sea Trust, The Nature Conservancy and The National Audubon Society. The John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park was the first of its kind, and now vast areas of water surrounding the Keys are protected within the National Marine Sanctuary. These steps are essential if we are to have any hope of preserving a bit of "paradise" for future generations to enjoy.

## 6. The Future of the Keys

The future of the Keys is tenuous: there are fortunes to be made in land development, but these come at a greater cost to the environment. The past two decades have seen massive development plans scuttled by the activism of one or just a few resolute individuals. Many resident environmentalists continue to staunchly defend the natural habitats remaining in and around the island chain and numerous organizations raise funds for restoration and teach others how to be better stewards of the Keys fragile ecosystems.

Significant challenges lie ahead. Large areas of the coral reefs continue to decline due to both human influence and natural causes. On the bayside the beds of sea grass are declining as well. Motorized watersports – fishing boats in particular – continue to damage the marine ecosystems as they run aground, strike marine mammals, or dump waste into the ocean waters. The pressure to develop land continues, and the emphasis is now upon redevelopment of out-dated commercial or low-density residential sites with higher density condominiums which are only sporadically occupied.

Agencies at all levels of government are making and implementing plans to attempt to provide "sustainable growth" while protecting the fragile natural resources. These include designation as an "Area of Critical State Concern," Monroe County's Rate of Growth Ordinance (ROGO), and transportation plans to alleviate congestion and facilitate emergency evacuation of the island chain.





## **B** - **EVENTS**

Below is a time line of significant events that occurred within or impacted life in the Keys.

1622 Hurricane and Spanish wreck

1733 Hurricane and Spanish wreck

1763 The Keys become English Territory

1763 Indians are removed

1784 Keys become Spanish Territory

1821 Simonton buys Key West

1821 Keys become US Territory

1830 Salt Industry Begins

1831 Indian Key wrecking

1837 Cigar Industry begins

1840 Indian Key burned

1849 Sponging Industry begins

1856 Key West becomes major shipping port

1870 First wave of Cuban immigrants for cigar manufacture

1873 First steamship service

1880-90 Peak of sponging and cigars

1898 Remember the Maine

1904 Flagler begins railroad

1906 End of pineapple industry

1912 Flagler finishes railroad

1914 Military build-up in Key West

1920's Rum running

1928 Road and ferry route

1934 The City of Key West declares bankruptcy

1935 Hurricane destroys the overseas railroad

1938 Overseas Highway completed

1945 Naval station

1942 Water pipeline

1949 Shrimping industry begins

1950 Tourism and development come to the Keys

1959 Castro comes to power, refugees

1960 John Pennekamp

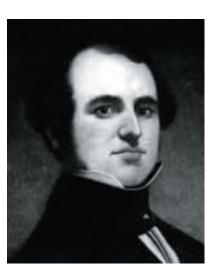
1982 New overseas highway

1991 National Marine Sanctuary

## C - PEOPLE

Early pioneers, entrepreneurs, and politicians shaped the Keys both physically and culturally. Below is a sample of significant names that should be highlighted in interpretive exhibits. Many are place-specific.

- 1. John Simonton
- 2. Russells, Pinders, Alburys
- 3. Commodore David Porter
- 4. William Curry
- 5. John James Audubon
- 6. John Jacob Housman
- 7. Adderleys
- 8. Henry Flagler
- 9. Ernest Hemingway
- 10. The Thompsons
- 11. Harry Harris
- 12. Jack Watson



John Simonton



Hurricane memorial



Cigar factory workers

# THE CHITCH STREET

Steamboat City of Key West

## **D-PLACES**

The following are just a sampling of the historic places throughout the Keys that merit interpretation to visitors and residents.

- 1. Key West settlement
- 2. Upper Matecumbe settlements
- 3. Rockport, Planter, Tavernier
- 4. Indian Key settlement
- 5. Key Vaca settlement
- 6. Ft. Taylor, Fort Jefferson
- 7. Carysfort Lighthouse
- 8. Islamorada Hurricane monument
- 9. Pigeon Key railroading

## **Culture**

The culture of the Keys is a combination of characteristics that make the Keys such a special place and includes people, their traditions, and their ways of life. Art, architecture, folk life, food and language are all integral to the Keys' atmosphere. Just as water currents brought in seeds, so too, until recently, people came to the Keys by water, bringing their culture with them. That culture was in turn shaped by the geography of the Keys and by other cultural groups also settling in the Keys. Each of these groups has played a role in shaping the uniquely funky and laid-back Florida Keys' life-style sought by permanent residents and tourists.

## 1. Food and Drink

Good meals and good drinks are integral to the Keys laid-back attitude. The Scenic Highway is peppered with restaurants. mostly small, family-owned business with family recipes. Seafood is a big attraction, and many restaurants use fresh local fish; it is yet another way the ecology and the economy of the Keys are linked together. Even food items which may sound like exotic delicacies now were once hugely popular in the Keys - in particular, turtle and conch popularized by Bahamian settlers. Unfortunately, over fishing virtually wiped out turtles and disseminated the Queen Conch. Today, the famous conch chowder is made with conch imported from various Caribbean islands, including the Bahamas. Fishermen are critical players in on-going efforts to strike the appropriate balance between conservation and economy. The fishermen who sell to the restaurants depend on the ocean for their livelihoods, but the risk of over fishing sets up the need for regulations. It's a constant struggle to balance the demand for local Keys delicacies while preserving sources for future generations.

Caribbean foods have had a major influence on Keys cuisine; there is even a name for a kind of fusion cuisine, Floribbean, which integrates the spices and tropical fruits of the islands with fresh seafood. Keys cuisine often has a French twist to it as well, due to the French influence in the Caribbean islands that have in turn inspired dishes in the Keys.



## 2. Attitude

So much of the Keys is about attitude. When people arrive in the Keys, they are on Keys' time, which is to say that everyone operates on their own schedule. Business casual is overdressed in the Keys. Relaxing and pursuing personal interests is as important, if not more important, than work.

There is a sense that everyone should lead their life as they see fit, leading to a culture that tolerates and even celebrates misfits and alternative life-styles. For tourists, this means they can indulge in behaviors they may not participate in at home, partying, celebrating and indulging in ways that would be considered inappropriate in their home community.

There is also a strong sense of individual independence. Since early Euro-American settler days, people needed to be self-sufficient and to rely only on themselves to survive and thrive. That sense of independence continues to mark the Keys' life-style. A tourist might refer to "the Keys" as one location, but a local resident is from a particular community and generally resents being lumped into one broad category. Each municipality is different, and each community prides itself on preserving its differences from other Keys' communities.

Keys' residents approach life with a sense of humor. Tense political situations are sometimes diffused with "tongue-incheck" banter such as the creation of the independent micronation of The Conch Republic. The call for independence was based on frustration over genuine concerns, and brought resolution through a sense of humor, that affirmed a spirit found throughout the Keys. That sense of humor now extends to the selling of tourist souvenirs with the Conch Republic theme.

## 3. Ethnic Diversity

The proximity of Caribbean islands has marked the Keys. Bahamian settlers in particular brought food and architectural styles that shape Keys' culture.

Until the Cuban Embargo in the 1950's, close links tied Key West and Havana. As early at the nineteenth century, Cuban cigar rollers settled in Key West. The Overseas Railroad brought northerners down the eastern seaboard as far as Key West where they boarded ships for the 90-mile crossing to Havana.

## 4. Tourism

Tourism is integral to the modern development of the Keys - as it is in all of Florida. The Overseas Railroad first opened the Keys to northern vacationers seeking an exotic experience. While many continued on to Havana, Cuba, some tourists stayed to explore Key West or enjoy the fishing camps along the way. With the depression, tourism disappeared. On July 5, 1934, an economically-devastated Key West relinquished all powers of government to the state. Governor, David Sholtz turned the problem over to New Deal Federal Relief Administrator, Julius Stone. Stone's idea of saving the town was to make it a resort area, capitalizing on the tourism industry. Tourism rose until the 1935 hurricane, when it went back into decline; however, World War II brought people and prosperity back, due to the military presence. The Overseas Highway was also integral in bringing back some family tourism, along with deep-sea fishermen. Family-owned motels, referred to as Mom-and-Pop motels, thrived along the roadway. Today, some have been replaced with larger chain hotels.

Today, the tourism industry is multi-faceted, with places of interest for a variety of people. Each section of the Keys has its own vibe. Key Largo, with its proximity to Miami and the mainland, is a great place for day-trippers with its funky, easily accessible atmosphere. Islamorada is known for offshore fishing and water activities. Marathon, with its affordable accommodations, central location, and proximity to historical artifacts including the railroad museum at Pigeon Key, attracts families. The Lower Keys attracts those interested in camping and wildlife. Finally, Key West, with its myriad museums, galleries, activities, and restaurants, and its eclectic mix of people, truly has something for everyone.





*The Keys are known for its diversity.* 



Tourism is integral to the Keys.

## 5. Architecture

The Keys are a trove of architectural gems, contributions from many of its varied settlers.

Shipwrights and carpenter-architects built the eclectic Victorian Key West cottages and Captain's Houses using shipbuilding techniques. They relied on their schooner building skills to construct their own homes. Many of these seafaring carpenter-architects borrowed architectural elements from buildings they observed during their travels to other ports. These individuals took pride in their craftsmanship as revealed by the style and architectural details their homes showcase. The lovely blend of Bahamian and Victorian architecture make for an extraordinary collection of houses, complimented by unique architectural varieties such as stilt houses and shotgun houses. Typical features of Key West architecture include shuttered windows, tin roofs, air scuttles, and a picket fence.

Bahamian houses built in the nineteenth century with tabby and other natural materials, are still quite prevalent. Tabby refers to a unique, centuries-old, southern U.S. coastal building material purportedly composed of equal proportions of homemade lime, sand, oyster shells and water. A surface layer of stucco originally protected the finished product.

The Tavernier historical district includes a variety of historic houses, in particular, hurricane houses among the first structures built to withstand hurricane force winds.

## 6. The Arts

The Keys are a hotbed of artistic talent, from musicians to visual artists, from performers to writers. Key West has been home to many talented authors, including Ernest Hemingway, musicians including Jimmy Buffett, and actors including Cary Grant. Small performing arts centers line the entire Keys stretch, with an unsurprising density of them in Key West. Many communities host annual arts festivals.

Ernest Hemingway spent ten years living in Key West, and they were the most prolific years of his literary career. Books written there include *A Farewell To Arms* and *To Have and Have Not*. To this day, an annual Hemingway Days is held in Key West, celebrating the author's life and his contributions to the area. The festival includes food and drink, fishing and street parties, a fiction contest, and a Hemingway Look-a-like competition.

Before Jimmy Buffett was an internationally known music star, he was a young man in Nashville, working on his first seldom-heard early album. In the early seventies, he headed to Miami for a gig that fell through, and wound up staying with an old friend, Jerry Jeff Walker. A weekend drive down A1A brought him to the town that would change his career and his life, enabling him to produce "Margaritaville," the song that would become emblematic of Key West. Buffet's second album, and one that started to bring him great renown was recorded in Nashville, but inspired by the Florida Keys; "A White Sport Coat and Pink Crustacean" featured songs including "Railroad Lady" and "Cuban Crime of Passion," which were informed by the history and culture of the Keys.



Bahamian architecture



Public Art - the Whaling Wall by Wyland

## a) People – Folk Heroes

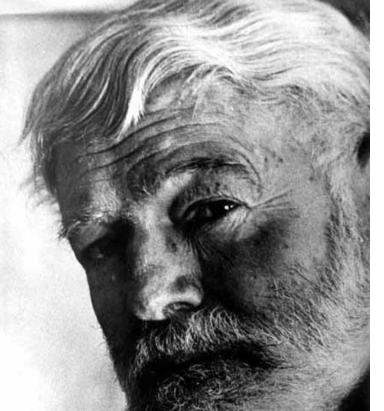
Many of the folk heroes of the Florida Keys are larger than life and stories of their lives are often as much fiction as fact. Listed below are a sample of the characters who are intriguing to visitors. Some of the less well-known names deserve greater recognition for their contributions to culture and environmental conservation in the Keys.

- 1. John James Audubon
- 2. Ernest Hemingway
- 3. Jimmy Buffett
- 4. Commissioner Wilhelmina Harvey
- 5. Mel Fisher
- 6. Dagny Johnson
- 7. Clyde Butcher (the Everglades)
- 8. Stanley Papio, artist
- 9. Mario Sanchez, artist
- 10. Captain Tony Terracino
- 11. K. Wilkinson
- 12. Zane Grey

## b) Places / Events

There are many places in the Keys that are synonymous with "good times" and returning visitors make it a point to return to these establishments each time they visit. Other places are not so much a specific location as they are a style of development, an architectural detail, or a space that visitors find evokes the "vibe" of Key West, Islamorada or any other Keys community. Lastly are the recurring events – such as annual festivals, fishing seasons, or the evening sunset that contribute to the culture of the Keys.

- 1. Sunset
- 2. Key West "Sunset"
- 3. Holiday Isle/Whale Harbor
- 4. Cheeca Lodge
- 5. Key West "Backyards"
- 6. Sloppy Joe's
- 7. Key West Architecture Boat Captains / Widows Watch
- 8. Bahama Village
- 9. Bahamian fruit vendors
- 10. Port Bougainvillea
- 11. Spring Break
- 12. Mini-lobster Season
- 13. Road Trip
- 14. Conch Republic





Street activities during sunset.

CHAPTER FIVE: INTERPRETIVE PLAN

## **C.** Interpretive Content Organization

## 1. Interpretive Philosophy

- a. Provide a unifying overview of the natural and cultural history of the region.
- b. Aid the traveler in understanding the interconnectedness of the natural and cultural systems.
- c. Make the experience fun.
- d. Integrate into the community organizational structure.
- e. Complement not compete with the existing organizations.
- f. Something for everyone the level of sophistication is chosen by the user.

## 2. Level 1 Interpretation – Providing the Comprehensive Overview

This overview provides visitors with the big picture of the Keys through geologic time, helping visitors understand how the landscape, the winds, currents and tides, and the marine environment, have all shaped each and every decision individuals have made as they explored, hunted, settled, or simply visited the Keys. The decisions we make today are likewise predicated on the same features. We may arrive at different conclusions, but the "Keys Landscape" informs modern decisions as much as it informed decisions in the past.

The environment remains the basis for man's survival, settlement, and enterprise in the Keys. The *Story of the Keys Landscape* exhibition will encourage visitors to consider how their decisions destroy or preserve the ecology of the Keys. It will explain sustainability, carrying capacity, and conditions of critical State concern.

Level 1 Interpretation is the backbone of the eco-tourism story for those who visit the five individual communities. It provides a backdrop for all other detailed learning explorations by the traveler. The traveler will find this story in the Community Visitor Center in all five communities: Key Largo, Islamorada, Marathon, Lower Keys, and Key West.

Level 1 Interpretation is also the backbone of the eco-tourism experience for those who plan on participating in the Total Length Experience. Level 1 messages will be reinforced in the Trailhead Corridor Stations, and on audio and podcasts to help travelers understand the *Story of the Keys Landscape*.

## 3. Level 2 Interpretation – Providing Content Through the Major Themes

The stories of each community will be told through the themes of ecology, heritage, and culture. To help travelers identify stories, each theme will be color-coded:

Ecology – green Heritage – yellow History – pink

## **Community Rooms in the Community Visitor Centers**

- The Community Rooms in each of the five Community Visitor Centers will be organized around the themes of ecology, heritage, and culture. While they will help travelers understand why the place is what is because of its ecology and heritage, the Community Room will focus more on providing in-depth information about culture.

The Interpretive Sites – The ten Interpretive Sites (two to three located in each community) will also be organized around the themes of ecology, heritage, and culture. Located along the Scenic Highway, the Interpretive Sites will "immerse" the visitor in ten different experiences, allowing them to understand the multiplicity of resources found in the Keys. Each site will be associated with one major story as follows:

- 1. Rock Harbor
  Heritage Pioneer settlement
- Sandy Sprunt Dove Creek Preserve
   Ecological Tropical hardwood hammock ecosystem transect
- 3. Windley Key State Geological Site Ecological geologic history
- Indian Key Fill
   Heritage Maritime history, wrecking,
   Spanish exploration period
- 5. Curry Hammock State Park Ecological - Marine Ecosystem
- 6. Knight's Key/Pigeon Key
  (functioning both as a trailhead and interpretive site)
  Heritage Transportation, Flagler Railroad Era
- 7. Ohio Key
  Ecological Climate of the Keys,
  significant birding site
- 8. Blue Hole Ecological - The Marshland and Pine-Flatwoods Ecosystem
- 9. Summerland Seafood Cultural – The Marine fisheries industry
- 10. Sugarloaf Boulevard Heritage – Pre-history, Native American culture settlement

## 4. Level 3 Interpretation – Exploring the Natural and Cultural Resources

The Scenic Highway mission includes providing visibility and access to the many existing interpretive venues throughout the Keys.

Comprehensive directories will be prepared to provide directions and reservations to all the public and private eco-tourism venues that are available in each community. The directories will be available in the Community Visitor Orientation Centers, Trailhead Centers, and on the Internet.



## **D.** Interpretive Exhibits

Note that this section is primarily intended as an outline of interpretation. Reader friendly text for the visitor is suggested in boxes throughout. At this stage in interpretive development, these are intended to give a flavor of the interpretation. The outline provides the scope and depth of interpretation that will be included in all of these interpretive sites. Community input was used to formulate the interpretive concepts for each community.

## Story of the Keys Landscape Exhibit

This exhibit is considered the core exhibition and is in each of the five Visitor Orientation Centers, weaving a ribbon of continuity throughout the visitor experience.

This overview exhibition explains the natural landscape evolutions and how this landscape influenced the historic events and cultural setting of the Keys. The exhibition includes maps that explain why the Keys look and feel the way they do as the visitor drives, bicycles, or kayaks the length of the island chain. Three-dimensional cut-a-ways show maritime and land-based eco-systems. One section will focus on the twentieth century creation of the Overseas Highway.



## Story of the Keys Landscape

The Florida Keys form a long ribbon extending the Florida peninsula deep into the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico. Today, we think of the Keys as a continuous stretch from Miami to Key West. The Keys are actually many small islands extending all the way to the Dry Tortugas. Just as the Marquesas and the Tortugas are inaccessible and inhospitable today, so were most of the islands of the Keys throughout much of time. Lack of fresh water created desert-like conditions on these spits of land surrounded by salt water.

## **Geological Information/Formation**

- The ancient sea organisms of the Rebecca Shoal Reef
- Tidal action, and sea level changes created existing structure
- How the shape of the Florida Peninsula has changed over millennia
- How changing levels of seawater and coral beds formed the Key Largo Limestone
- Today, Key Largo Limestone is close to the surface in the Upper and Middle Keys and buried deep below Miami Oolite in the Lower Keys. This in turn affects soil type and water content of the soil, and thus vegetation. Different eco-systems thrive in the different regions.

## **Ecological Setting**

- A few inches of change in elevation creates different ecosystems
- Few fresh water sources
- Different Keys, different temperatures, different rainfall, different ecosystems
- Among greatest diversity of plant species of any North American location

## **Marine Ecosystem**

- The ecosystem is a product of tidal movement, underwater elevation, climate, hydrology, vegetation/foodcycle.
- Coral Reefs are formed on the edge of the Continental Shelf

- Sea grass beds and sponges thrive in the shallow waters of the Gulf of Mexico
- Currents, tides, and winds affect marine life and the reefs
- Description of how reefs are formed and how old they are
- Cycles of marine life, predators and prey

## **Creation of the Gulf Stream**

- How one of the world's most powerful currents is created in the Gulf of Mexico
- Florida Straits give it its power
- It shapes climate along the Eastern seaboard and in Northern Europe
- It controls trade and shipping routes

### Climate

• The climate is a function of solar radiation, gravity, and hydrography.

### **Terrestrial Ecosystem**

- Climate, geology, soils, and hydrology create the setting for the plants that exist.
- The wildlife are there because of the climate, plant materials and hydrology.

## **Pre-history**

- Subsistence living on marine and terrestrial environment
- Travel via water
- Trade based on marine products
- Shelter based upon plant life and geology

## **Spanish Exploration**

• Based on Gulf Stream hydrography and climate

### **Early Settlement**

- Based on wrecking: climate reefs
- Natural resource based industry: charcoal, conch, turtles, and pineapples
- Water based travel enterprise

## **Hurricane and Human Interaction**

- Hurricanes cause major wrecks for Spanish Fleet in 1622, 1715,1733
- Hurricanes devastate Overseas Highway

### **Human Interaction**

- Pre-historic settlements around fresh water sources
- Why the Spanish Fleets assembled in Havana, and wreck in the Florida Keys
- Rest of Keys are isolated settlements
- Spanish
- 1762 English territory and sporadic Bahamian settlements of descendants of pre-Revolutionary war American colo--nists who fled to the Bahamas
- 1784 back to Spain
- 1819 sporadic American settlers
- Key West as nineteenth century international shipping hub
- Flagler's Folly
- •Taking advantage of the geology to build the Overseas Railroad, but ignoring hydrology and ecology
- How the railroad led to the building of the Overseas Highway and an aqueduct to Key West
- Conservation: Twentieth century creation of marine sanctuaries and preserves
- Sustainability: Twenty-first century questions

### **Early 1900's**

- Flagler land and water bridge
- Trade goods

## 1920's and 1950's booms

• Climate, marine resources, and transportation land bridge

### Recent

• Climate, marine resources







## **Community I:**

**Key Largo Visitor Center Key Largo Chamber of Commerce (V1)** 

## Ecology

*Landside:* Hardwood Hammock – forms the spine of the archipelago to Tavernier

- Soil type
- Rainfall
- Species diversity
- Birding

Waterside: Atlantic Reefs

- Soft coral
- Hard coral
- Reefs as ancient life forms
- Only reef in the continental U.S.
- Fragility of reefs
- Role of Gulf side in providing shelter for young fish
- Include map of water access and diving sites

SAMPLE: Explanatory text such as the following with lush under-sea photos

## Reef Ecology: The Snake-Haired Sisters and Castle Builders

The reef off the shore of Key Largo is one of beauty and wonder. The living organisms that form and build the reef are coral polyps and they come in two forms - hard and soft corals. The soft corral, named *Gorgonians* after the snake-haired sisters of Greek myths have a flexible skeleton that sway in the ocean currents. The shapes and colors of this coral vary wildly from peacock blue sea fans to pink tubes and aquamarine whips. Although equally wondrous in color and form, the hard coral have a rigid exoskeleton and are the castle builders of the reef ecosystem. Brain, elk horn, pillar, star, and flower coral are among the castle builders that create spiraling structures and sprawling contorted formations. The reef construction process is painstakingly slow adding merely inches of growth per year as the coral polyps build on the skeletons of former colonies that have become compressed into limerock.



In Good Company

The highly acclaimed Keys' scuba diving is attributable to the diversity of species as well as the abundance of them regularly observed by divers. The Keys are famous for schooling fish. The blue-striped grunt is the icon of the Florida Keys, typically seen schooling in large numbers around the protection of stands of elk horn coral. French grunts are nearly as plentiful, and most reefs will feature congregates of small-mouth grunt as well. Although yellowtail snapper are a favorite of local anglers, they continue to cruise the reef in astonishing numbers. Other Keys critters that typically school in vast numbers along the reef include glass minnows, goatfish, gray snappers, Atlantic spadefish, horse eye jacks, copper sweepers, Bermuda chubs, and sergeant majors. Even fish that are normally solitary, like barracuda and blue tang, frequently school together on the reefs of the Florida Keys.

## • Heritage

## Pineapple Boom

- 1860, Bahamian Captain Benjamin Baker plants first pineapple farm on Key Largo. By 1875 the Keys were shipping a million crates of pineapple a year. Blight and the hurricane of 1906 destroy the crop. Soil too poor to recover.
- Place names related to Pineapple Boom (Plantation Key, Planter)

### Fruit Farms

- 1860's-1912
- Limes, melons, tomatoes
- Railroad and hurricanes put them out of business

## Lighthouse

Tavernier: Oldest settlement in the Upper Keys

SAMPLE: Explanatory text such as the following with late 19th century farming and schooner photos

## **Schooner Shipments**

Prior to the Florida East Coast Railway, small towns like Planter shipped out millions of crates of limes, melons, and tomatoes by schooner. The railroad in combination with persistent hurricanes put an end to little coastal communities like Planter and their large fruit farms. With the arrival of the railroad to Key West, produce from all over the Caribbean and South America started pouring in to the Keys ports. The railroad provided a means for introducing this cheaper produce to the mainland and put many Keys farmers out of business.



Spraying limes on Key Largo ca. 1930

Early fruit farms, courtesy of the Florida Photographic Collection



Early Schooner, courtesy of the Florida Photographic Collection

## • Culture

## Hollywood Influence-Humphrey Bogart

- Rock Harbor to *Key Largo* after the 1948 movie starring Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall. Postal authorities granted the request in 1952.
- *The African Queen*, the boat from another Bogart movie is in Key Largo and open to tourists.

### Kevs Attitude

- The Florida Keys Memorial (aka Hurricane Monument) dedicated in 1937 to the World War I veterans and civilians who perished in the Labor Day hurricane of 1935 (veteran army building Overseas Railroad).
- Laid-back living
- Ticky-tack tourist funk of the 1950's
- Day trippers
- Gambling
- Bougainvillea development

SAMPLE: Explanatory text such as the following with Bogart related photos

## **Bogart Business**

Key Largo's claim to Humphrey Bogart is tenuous, but you'd never know it. The legendary actor starred in a movie called *Key Largo* in 1948, but Bogart didn't visit the Keys during the filming. In fact, the movie is nothing but counterfeit Keys - with the exception of a few interior set scenes shot at the Caribbean Club, the entire movie was filmed in Hollywood. Prior to the movie, the town of Key Largo was named "Rock Harbor." Following the movie, real estate developers lobbied to change the town's name to Key Largo in order to capitalize on the movie's publicity and Bogart and co-star Lauren Bacall's fame. In 1952, the postal authorities conceded and 'Key Largo' was established as the town name and ever since the community has celebrated its ties to the legendary Bogart. The *African Queen*, the boat from another Bogart movie of the same name is moored at the Holiday Inn in Key Largo and is open for tours.



🌉 Humphrey Bogari

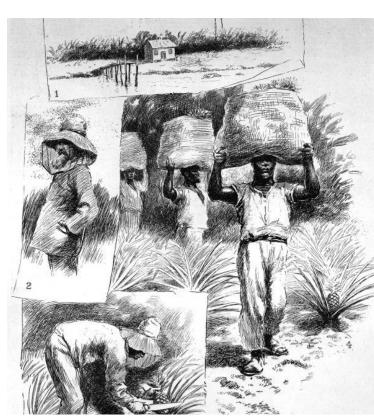
The African Queen

## Key Largo Interpretive Site 1: Rock Harbor Community (I1)

## • Heritage

## Pioneer Settlement Pineapple Boom

- 1860, Bahamian Captain Benjamin Baker plants first pineapple farm on Key Largo. By 1875, the Keys were shipping a million crates of pineapple a year.
- Place names related to Pineapple Boom (Plantation Key, Planter)
- 1906 blight combined with a hurricane destroyed the crops and the soil is too poor to recover and sustain an other crop.

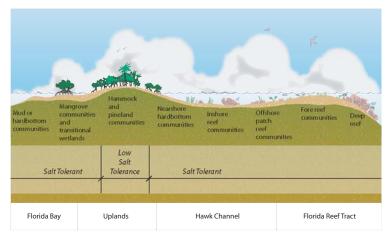


Pineapple farm workers

## **Key Largo Interpretive Site 2: Sandy Sprunt Dove Creek Preserve (I2)**

## Ecology

- The Ecological Transect
  - Tropical hardwood hammock ecosystem
  - Biotic communities profile
- Bird Migration
- Habitat Conservation
- Mangroves
   Nursery of the ocean. Role of mangroves in fishing, species protection.
- Terrestrial fauna
- Bedrock/soils/climate relationships



Ecological transect - biotic communities profile

SAMPLE: Explanatory text such as the following with lush under-sea photos

## Fantastically Fragile

The coral reefs are enchanting and inviting yet they suffer from misuse. The stony reefs are vulnerable to even the slightest touch that can crush the fragile living coral polyp, exposing the entire coral head to infection and disease. Visitors that touch, stand, or scrape the coral with fins, hands or equipment damage a coral that has grown for hundreds of years. This irreplaceable and non-renewable resource must be respected. All coral the entire length of the Keys is protected. Breaking off pieces of coral is prohibited. Coral reefs are suffering globally. Scientists report that 30% are already damaged. Corals grow only in warm tropical waters ideally between 70-85 degrees Fahrenheit. Although climatic and geologic changes affect them, human activities have had far greater consequences over the past decade.



Coral reefs - Fantastically Fragile

## **Community II**

Islamorada Visitor Center - Caboose Site

Ecology

### Landside:

Lignumvitae Key tropical hammock with butterflies and tree snails (via boat excursion)

- Maritime birds
- Migratory songbirds
- Conservation
- Geology Windley Key

### Waterside

- Deep sea fishing
- Conservation
- Tides
- Marine ecosystems
- Fish species





Entry to Matheson House on Lignumvitae Key

SAMPLE: Explanatory text such as the following with lush photos of the Key

## Eden of the Keys

On Ligumvitae Key, a wild jungle awaits visitors. Walking under the shade of Strangler fig, pigeon plum, and mahogany trees, visitors are transported back into the Keys botanical past.

Ligumvitae Key is one of the last untouched bits of sub-tropical forests left in Florida and is considered by botanists to be a virgin hammock. At 18 feet above sea level, Ligumvitae contains the highest point in the Keys. The island takes its name from the Lignum Vitae tree - wood of life - a species noted for the extreme density of its wood and the rich resins that keep the wood from drying out. Lignum Vitae is celebrated as a tree in the garden of Eden and is known today in the Bahamas as "holywood" for its curative properties. According to 15th century botanical tomes, whoever consumed the Lignum Vitae was said to be strengthened with perpetual health, clothed in immortality and protected from anxiety, weakness and infirmity.

## Hammock Inhabitants

Uninhabited by man, Ligumvitae and many of the Lower Keys are far from desolate. In fact, these landscapes teem with life. Many species of butterflies are found in the hammock, as well as varieties of colorful liguus tree snails. The tropical forests are rich in bird life including white-crowned pigeons, brown pelicans, ospreys, double-crested cormorants, gulls, and terns. Migratory songbirds use the hammock as a stopping ground - in the summer and fall black-whiskered vireos and mangrove cuckoos are often spotted.

## Snail Snatching

All of Florida's tropical hammocks were home to varieties of tree snails. The snails of each area evolved distinct color patterns on their shells and were very popular with collectors around the world. Unfortunately, snail harvesting was widespread in the Keys and the practice was not the least bit sensitive to the natural resource value of the hammocks and their inhabitants. Collectors would enter a hammock, collect a few snails and then set the land on fire to increase the rarity and value of the snail variety they collected. Ligumvitae Key, which managed to escape the snail snatchers boasts a snail with a creamy white shell neatly circled with fine bands of red and green.



A mangrove cuckoo



Example of a liguus tree snail

## • Heritage

Audubon

Fishing Resort History

• Long Key Overseas Railroad construction camp become the Long Key Fishing Club catering to wealthy fisherman.

Indian Key Spanish fleets



Below: Long Key Fishing Club (Florida Photographic collection)



## • Culture

## Keys Attitude

- Cheeca Lodge, Harry Truman, and Zane Grey
- Upscale Tourism
- Sport Fishing and Charter Boats
- Fly fishing

SAMPLE: Explanatory text such as the following with lush photos of the Key and fishing

Tarpon: The Silver Kings

Spring through July, Tarpon are the fish of choice among the Middle Keys anglers. Schools of tarpon congregating under the bridges to race through the deep channels into the shallow flats to spawn and feed attract droves of fisherman. Tarpon are not edible, but they are legendary performers. A hooked tarpon will take a novice angler for the ride of his life - upon crashing the bait or fly, a tarpon will jump, shake and even tail-walk.



Tarpon (above) and fly fisherman at sunset (right)

## **Islamorada Interpretive Site 1:** Windley Key State Geologic Site (I3)

## Ecology

- The marine ecosystem
- Geologic history



Geologic Epochs

## Islamorada Interpretive Site 2: Indian Key Fill (I4)

This site will interpret the history of Indian Key, visible in the distance. A "you are here" panel will outline the located of what is visible to the tourist (Indian Key State Park, Tea Table Key as well as the reefs underwater).

## • Heritage

- Settlement of Indian Key by John Jacob Housman, seeking to escape stringent salvage restrictions of Key West.
- Salvage is a legitimate trade whereby salvers rescue cargo from wrecked ships, and for a fee, return it to the owner. The proceedings take place at the Federal Courthouse in Key West. Lighthouses play key role.
- By 1836, Indian Key is thriving port with shops, houses, and the Tropical hotel. More populous that all of the rest of Dade County, Housman lobbies for it to be designated the seat of Dade County.
- Second Seminole War: By 1836, naval base on Tea Table Key. In 1840, troops moved for a major offensive into the Everglades, leaving Indian Key vulnerable. August 7, 1840, Native Americans attack, homes and warehouses burned to the ground. Settlers flee and do not return.
- Spanish exploration- trade ships (see map on next page)
- Killer reefs

SAMPLE: Explanatory text such as the following with line-drawings of the archeological remnants

The Characters of Indian Key: a wrecker, a physician-botanist and a band of angry Seminoles

For what it's worth, the tales of Indian Key are a blend of island lore and historical truth:

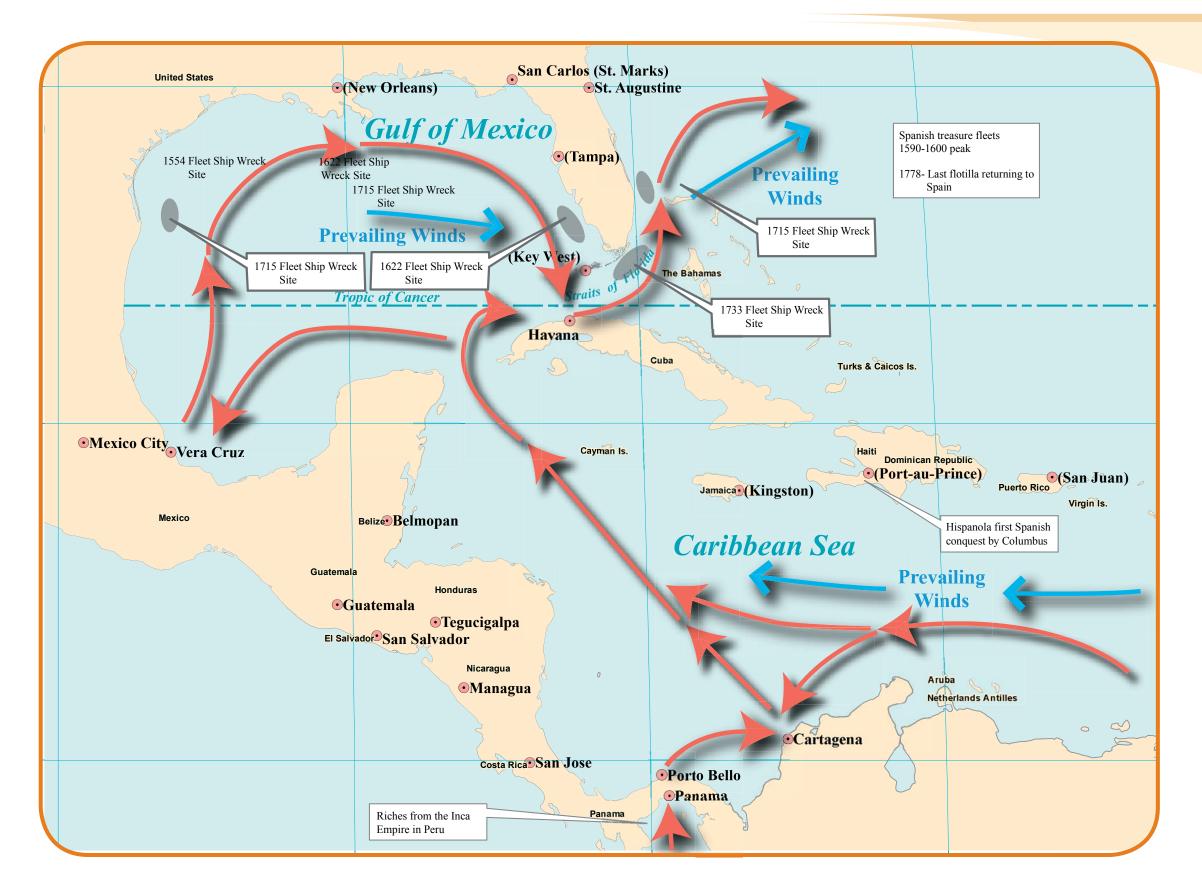
In the 1830's, John Jacob Housman, the wrecker who relocated to the Keys from Staten Island, established a salvaging station on Indian Key. A settlement of 55 inhabitants, three streets, a post office, wharves and even a hotel, the Tropical, formed around the Housman's prosperous wrecking enterprise. Dr. Henry Perrine, the physician-botanist, was a resident who established a nursery on nearby Lower Matecumbe and did plant research on Indian Key. Intent on cultivating useful tropical plants, Perrine experimented with agave for the manufacture of hemp and also grew tea, coffee, bananas and mangos. While Dr. Perrine treated sick Seminole Indians, Housman was allegedly plotting to hunt and kill them for a bounty.

In what may have been a random attack or calculated revenge for Housman's Indian killing scheme, a band of more than 100 Seminoles attacked the island on August 7th, 1840. Most of the island residents, including Housman and his wife, managed to escape by fleeing the island or hiding in turtle kraals near their homes or cisterns below them. Some residents were killed in the attack and the subsequent looting and burning of the buildings. Dr. Perrine was killed and his house set on fire.

Nearly all the structures on Indian Key were destroyed during the attack - only one building and some stone foundations remain. Although some of the inhabitants returned to the island after the incident, the settlement never rebounded. Indian Key has remained uninhabited since the early part of this century and Dr. Perrine's plants have gradually grown over the ruins. (story adapted from http://www.abfla.com/parks/IndianKey/Indiankey.html - FI State Park's Indian Key State Historic Site)



Dr. Henry Perrine did plant research on Indian Key.



## **Community III**

## Marathon Visitor Orientation Center (V3) Museum and Nature Center of Crane Point

## Ecology

### Landside:

- Hardwood hammocks
- Geology

Waterside: Include map of water access and diving sites

- Commercial fishing and lobstering
- Marine nurseries
- Tidal flow larval settlement, migration of lobster and fish from bay to ocean
- Conservation
- Weather



Lobstering is part of the ecology of Marathon.

SAMPLE: Explanatory text such as the following with lush photos of mangroves and a microscope for kids to look through and see actual critters from this magnificent nursery

### Marine Nurseries

Mangroves are salt-tolerant trees with submerged roots that are a nursery and breeding ground for birds and most of the marine life that migrates to the reef. Mangroves trap and produce nutrients for food and habitat, stabilize the shoreline and act as a filter for water draining off the land to the sea. Mangrove clusters often shelter dozens of cormorants, reddish egrets and other fish eaters.



## • Heritage

### Overseas Railroad

- Flagler's East Coast Railway Company, begun in 1885 down the east coast of Florida, linked hotels by rail from St. Augustine to Miami. Reasons for a Key West Extension begun in 1905 include rail service from New York to Havana (with steamer service from Key West to Havana), and commercial service through the Panama Canal.
- Eighth wonder of the world. Rivals the Panama Canal in engineering challenge. Reflects 19<sup>th</sup> century railroad construction.
- 1905-1912, dredging and excavation dramatically shifts the shorelines of the Keys. Rock and sand marl quarried and transported use maps and cutouts to show changes. (Include construction photos.)
- Hurricanes of 1906, 1909, 1910 sweep away sections of completed track out to sea, kill workers, and slow progress. Flagler rebuilds each time, changing construction techniques. (Include construction photos.)
- 1912 Railroad opens (include photos of celebration in Key West, commemorative materials, and 1912 advertisements and maps)
- Hurricane of 1935 destroys the railroad. Not rebuilt. (Include newspaper headlines and photos of devastation.)
- Overseas Highway and Toll Authority, in 1938, begins reusing the bridges and rebuilding the road. Completed 1942. (Include photos of ferries, and early rest area along road.)

## • Culture

- Marathon named by RR workers
- Family tourism develops with Overseas Highway and Toll Authority (photos of 1940's Mom and Pop motels)
- Fishermans' life

## Marathon Interpretive Site 1: Curry Hammock State Park (I5)

## • Ecology

Geology, hydrography, hydrology Marine Ecosystem

- Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic Ocean waters' and reefs role in health of marine species
- Ecosystem ranges from reefs to mangroves, and deep ocean to tidal flats
- Role of marine sanctuaries in protecting ecosystems



## Marathon Interpretive Site 2: Knights Key/Pigeon Key (16)

## Heritage

The Flagler Railroad Era

• Construction of the railroad, a 20th century engineering feat (panels show historic photos of the railroad and the roadway, showing changes over time. Brief timeline)

## **Transportation**

• Seven Mile Bridge construction Pigeon Key with brief explanation of what travelers will find there, if they walk out.



## Ecology

## **Marathon Interpretive Site 3: Ohio Key (I7)**

The Climate of the Keys

- How winds and tides shape the land
- How winds and tides shape marine life
- The Keys weather systems in global context
- The Gulf Stream in global context

Significant Birding Site

## **Community IV**

**Lower Keys Visitor Orientation Center (V4) Sugarloaf Resort** 

## • Ecology

### Landside:

- Key Deer
- Conservation of Key Deer habitat slash pine
- Conservation efforts
- Conservation Watson's Hammock: In 1976, Robert B. Watson began homesteading 107 acres on Big Pine Key at Blue Hole. He was a naturalist. His widow sells land. It is preserved and sold to the North American Wildlife Foundation as part of the National Key Deer Refuge.

Waterside: Include map of water access and diving sites

- Keys "back country"
- Migratory songbirds (Include map of birding sites nearby)
- Reefs

## • Heritage

- From the road, this "feels" like unspoiled Keys
- Native American life-style
- Tension between preservation/conservation and development
- Bat tower
- Bridge technology

## • Culture

- Conservation, wildlife refuges, marine sanctuaries
- Keys attitude Independence and self-sufficiency
- Blimp
- Oldest bar/resort
- Nature reclusives











Tunnels through the mangroves provide interesting kayaking.

CHAPTER FIVE: INTERPRETIVE PLAN

## Lower Keys Interpretive Site 1: Blue Hole (I8) Lower Keys Interpretive Site 2:

## Ecology

The Marshland and Pine-Flatwoods Eco-system

- The Key Deer and the preservation of endangered species
- Role of wildlife refuges on land and in the water
- Explanation of habitats found around Blue Hole
- Man-made quarry site and the building of the Overseas Railroad



Key Deer

## **Lower Keys Interpretive Site 2 Summerland Seafood (I9)**

## • Culture

The Marine Fisheries Industry

- Commercial fishing industry
- Seafood delicacies
- Role of conservation among fisherman
- Role of marine sanctuaries and conservation measures
- Keys marine fisheries in global context

The commercial fishing industry is part of the culture of the Lower Keys.

## Lower Keys Interpretive Site 3: Sugarloaf Boulevard (I10)

## • Heritage

- Pre-history settlement
- Native American settlement

SAMPLE: Explanatory text such as the following with lush photos of the Key and a shadow cut-out of a Prehistoric campsite visible in the distance.

### Ancient Ones Living off the Land and Sea

Archeologists can confirm that Native American's occupied the Keys as early as 1000 BC. By 100 AD, a small Native American population began to flourish, growing into more substantial populations that thrived until the arrival of European settlers in the 1500's when they were either killed by disease or relocated to Cuba. Using shells for tools and dugout canoes for transportation, the hunter-gathering Keys Native Americans based their diet on seafood, namely fish, turtle, lobster, shellfish, seals and manatee. Deer and raccoon as well as sea grapes, palm berries and cocoplums also provided sustenance.



Conch and Manatee were part of the Native American diet.



## **Community V**

## **Key West Visitor Orientation Center: McCoy Indigenous Park (V5)**

## Ecology

## Land Side:

- Bird Migration
- It's not the end of the line Marquesas and Dry Tortugas

## Waterside:

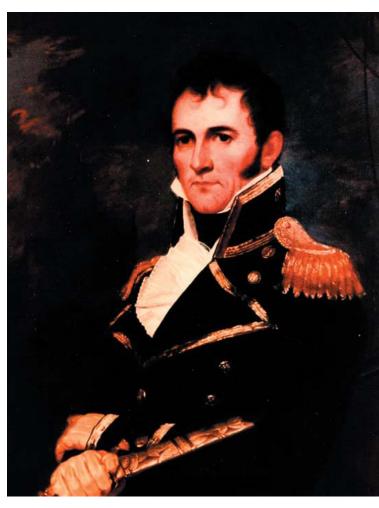
- Florida Straits and the Gulf Stream
- Maritime Sanctuaries



Sonny McCoy Indigenous Park on Key West.

## • Heritage

- •Ponce de Leon's 1513 Expedition
- First settlement: Cayo Hueso or Key West (1922)
- Boom to Bust: 1880's most populous city in Florida, wealthiest per capita in U.S. By 1930's, among poorest
- Nineteenth Century: commercial seaport, schooner-mak ers, cigar makers, sponging, and turtle kraals
- Arrival of Railroad
- Connection to Havana
- Overseas Road
- The End of the Road
- Defending the Continent



Coffodore David Porter led an anti-piracy campaign.

## • Culture

## Keys Attitude

- Sunsets and laid-back life-style
- Keys independence

## Keys Culture

- Arts, Music, Literature
- Bahamian Conchs

### Tourism

- Cruise ships
- Conch train
- Mallory Square/Duval

SAMPLE: Explanatory text such as the following with photos

## 'Conchs' What's in the name?

By the late 1700's, Bahamians were fishing and turtling on the Keys as well as engaging in 'wrecking' - the practice of salvaging cargo from sinking ships and selling the goods in the port of Nassau. In 1821, when Spain ceded Florida to the United States many of these enterprising Bahamians became residents of this country and moved to Key West - the primary hub of the wrecking industry. These Bahamians were called 'Conchs,' likely named after the large sea snails they ate and whose shells they sometimes used as a trumpet to signal a 'wreck ashore,' The name may have been assigned despairingly at first, but today the title is used to describe a lifelong resident of the Keys. Conchs and their descendents wear their moniker with pride. Key West has commandeered the title claiming that a true Conch is a person born on the "Rock" of Key West, where the birth of a baby was one announced by putting a conch shell on a stick in the front yard.





## **E.** Interpretive Tools

Interpretation is a communication process that forges emotional and intellectual connections between the interests of the audience and the meanings inherent in the resource.

A whole range of interpretive tools will be used to engage diverse ages, abilities and interests at the Trailheads, Community Visitor Centers, and Community Interpretive Sites. They will include:

- Website
- Exhibitions
- Unified wayside exhibits
- Unified brochures
- DVDs
- CDs
- Cell Phones
- Ipods
- Personal tours
- Walking tours
- Bike tours
- Kayak tours
- Programs
- Educational Outreach
- Events
- Festivals
- Works of art
- Street Theater
- Puppetry
- Living History
- Road Rally
- Podcasting
- Geocaching
- Hand-powered No electricity audio
- Public Art

Each of these interpretive tools will make the Keys experience creative, fun, and memorable. A few unusual interpretive tools are described below: podcasting, geocaching, hand powered, no electricity audio devices, and public art. In addition, the Scenic Highway program will support and encourage myriad opportunities for programs that teach environmental stewardship and promote a sustainable ethic. Possibilities are described in section E.5, Cooperative Programming.

## 1. Podcasting

Podcasting is a term coined in 2004 when the use of RSS syndication technologies became popular for distributing audio content for listening on mobile devices and personal computers. A podcast is a web feed of audio or video files placed on the internet for anyone to subscribe to, and is generally analogous to a recorded television or radio series. Anyone with an internet connection can easily download a podcast and transfer it right into an iPod or other portable mp3 player.

Tourist destination sites all over the world are utilizing the portability of this breakthrough technology to their advantage. Whether you're taking a walking tour of an entire city, or looking for a more in-depth take on a specific site, podcasts can help guide your way to points of interest you don't want to miss.

The website for the city of Galveston, Texas offers a new episode available through podcast every week, highlighting tourism information and events happening in the area. The official website for Edinburgh, Scotland also offers a podcast for download with interesting tidbits about the area you can listen to in advance of your trip, as well as a guided tour you can use as you move through the city.

The website BudgetTravelOnline.com has noted the increase in podcasts as travel tools; in an article on the podcast phenomena, they observed that the Apples iTunes download list includes over one hundred travel-oriented podcasts. The article goes on to recommend four of the best, from places as diverse as San Francisco, Kyoto. London, and Spain.

More and more specific sites of tourist interest are also taking advantage of the ease of the technology. The website for the San Diego Zoo offers an option where visitors can design their own podcast, depending on which parts of the premises they are interested in. The end result is a customized, portable self-guided tour with each specific visitor's interests in mind.

The use of the podcast as a tool in an official capacity has been informed, in large part, by students who stumbled onto the technology early. In 2005, a group of students at Marymount Manhattan College under Professor David Gilbert were assigned to come up with an audio guide that people who normally wouldn't get an audio guide at a museum could relate to. The irreverent commentaries of the exhibits at New York's

Museum of Modern Art caused such a stir, people started bringing in the work of the students instead of checking out museum-made guided tours. The students have since formed a group called Art Mobs to continue the project, with the full support of MoMa, and have begun enlisting the help of local high-school students.

Podcasts hold enormous potential, in that they can be a convenient and informative manner of educating tourists about an area, but they can also be fun and engaging in a way that guidebooks may not be able to attain. Additionally, due to their adaptability, the technology may be utilized in a way in which a group of people may listen all at the same time.

The Florida Keys Overseas Highway provides an opportunity for the podcast technology to be used in a new format. Many tapes exist that provide driving tours of certain areas, and local radio stations often discuss points of interest for tourists. However, tapes become outdated, and radio stations fade in and out, whereas podcasts can be constantly updated and go wherever the traveler goes.

As a visitor drives the length of the highway, a podcast can provide historical information about an area, as well as provide guidance on good stopping points for meal, shopping, and sightseeing. Local lore can be told in an engaging way by a variety of people, and breaks could even be made for local music. As visitors make stops along the way, the podcast can be paused and then resumed when the trip starts back up.

Anyone with a portable mp3 player can load the podcast and hook it up to the car speakers, so that the whole family can enjoy the listening experience, or one person can listen to their portable device with headphones.



The flexibility and ease of this technology, in addition to its convenience and low expense, make it an ideal tool to convey the story of the Overseas Highway as tourists traverse it.

http://www.galveston.com/

http://www.edinburgh.org/

http://www.budgettravelonline.com/btdyn/content/article/2005/11/09/AR2005110901334.html

http://www.sandiegozoo.org/podcast/index.html

http://www.onthemedia.org/transcripts/transcripts\_082605\_ museum.html

http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/ 2005/12/20/AR2005122001570.html http://mod.blogs.com/art\_mobs/



CHAPTER FIVE: INTERPRETIVE PLAN

## 2. Geocaching

Geocaching is an outdoor activity involving the use of a GPS receiver or traditional navigational techniques to find a "geocache" placed anywhere in the world. A typical cache is a small, waterproof container containing a logbook and "treasure," usually trinkets of little value. Geocaching is similar to a much older activity called letterboxing - the major difference is its use of the GPS and the Internet.

The first documented placement of a cache with GPS assistance took place on May 3, 2000 by Dave Ulmer of Beaver Creek, Oregon. The location was posted on a Usenet newsgroup, and by May 6, 2000, it had been found twice and logged once. More than 200,000 geocaches have placed around the world since, and are registered on various websites devoted to geocaching.

For the traditional geocache, a geocacher will place a water-proof container, containing a log book (with pen or pencil) and treasures, then note the cache's coordinates. These coordinates, along with other details of the location are posted online. Other geocachers obtain the coordinates from the Internet and use GPS receivers to seek out the cache. Once a person has found a geocache, they will record their exploits in the logbook and online.

Geocachers are free to take objects from the cache in exchange for leaving something of similar or higher value, so there's treasure for the next person to find. Typical cache treasures tend to be inexpensive trinkets, or unusual currency. Two-dollar bills are a popular item.

Geocaching is a great activity for all ages. The activity is perfect for exposing kids to nature and places of cultural and historical significance, and for teaching them how to use navigational tools.

Geocaches can be created by individual organizations, or by collaborations of different organizations who can turn the geocache game into a collective treasure hunt, encouraging travelers to bicycle or walk to their next destination. Geocaches can also be placed in areas only accessible by kayak.

http://www.eduscapes.com/geocaching/kids.htm http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geocaching http://www.geocaching.com/faq

## 3. Hand powered, no electricity audio

Some of the Community Interpretive Sites may not have power in remote locations. Using hand-powered audio devices allows the delivery of interpretation without electricity. A visitor will press a button, selecting one of four or eight messages, and turn the handle for the duration of the message. An LED progress indicator provides user feedback on the balance of the message remaining. The device can deliver different messages, or messages in different languages. Devices are weather resistant and have a track record of holding up under harsh climate.

These devices will be particularly useful to deliver information about animal sounds, and oral histories about the site. They also provide an alternative to text panels for delivering interpretive information.

Example at www.tourmate.com/outdoor.html



## 4. Public Art

Inviting artists to create landmarks along a roadway will foster a sense of community and provide alternative visuals for interpreting the Florida Keys ecology, heritage and history. For instance on Rt. 66 and El Camino Real "Cultural Corridors: Public Art on Scenic Highways" commissioned ten monumental landmark artworks which honor and celebrate both roads and the communities they link.

In addition to creating landmarks, public art projects can also enhance the smaller elements of any public space, such as railings, benches, bus stops, bike shelters, or picnic tables, all of which create the overall atmosphere of the rest area, and provide visual continuity along the Scenic Highway.

Public art projects offer a way for community members to participate in the planning, design, and creation of communal space. Public art can provide direct tools for community members to help design, with artists, the rest areas and bike stops on the Scenic Highway, thus helping to shape how travelers will respond to and understand the communities along the road.

With art helping to create an inviting sense of place, there is evidence vandalism decreases. By enhancing a sense of ownership by the community, the perception of safety increases. There are also numerous examples of art attracting media attention that would not otherwise occur. Community buy-in can also help mitigate negative impressions for communities who will have to put up with traffic congestion during road construction – no matter how large or small the construction project.

In addition to creating freestanding works of art, artists can be invited to serve as designers for discreet elements of what makes a place. They can be invited to consider environmental factors, changing weather, history, culture, ethnicity, and changing patterns of light in the development of guard rails, benches, picnic tables, or shade shelter.

<u>Examples</u>: The cluster of photos on this page provide a sample of the sometimes serious, and sometimes whimsical, ways in which artists can encourage us to appreciate our environment and built landscape.

<u>Partners:</u> It is recommended the Corridor Management Entity partner with the Monroe County Arts Council to fundraise for Scenic Highway public art, develop criteria for commissioning works of art, implementing the program, and maintaining the works of art long-term.

<u>Funding Source:</u> The Federal Surface Transportation program provides funds to states for Transportation Enhancement (TE) Activities. This program provides funding for involving artists in designs of public amenities such as bike paths, rest areas, scenic byways visitor centers, and interpretive sites along roadways. Administered in Florida through the FDOT.





CHAPTER FIVE: INTERPRETIVE PLAN

## **5. Cooperative Programming**

Each of the organizations along the Scenic Highway – Trailhead and Community Visitor Centers, and Community Interpretive Sites – will provide opportunities and venues for programming with organizations in the community, including festivals, events, education sessions, lectures, or workshops that relate to ecology, history, and the arts of the Keys. Local non-profits, schools, Chambers of Commerce, area businesses, citizen groups, and governmental organizations will be encouraged to work in collaboration with the Corridor Management Entity to develop activities that excite residents and tourists about the Keys and that cultivate a stewardship ethic. Examples listed suggest the many programming opportunities that can be developed.

These examples focus on activities and events that can be developed inexpensively in the next year or two to create excitement about the Scenic Highway. Each can of course be sustained for years to come, but they are listed here because they can play a role in generating excitement for and interest in the creation of the many interpretive venues along the Highway.

• Fishy Fish Phenomena – a seafood festival highlighting good food and environmental stewardship of the waters around the Keys. Such an event provides the opportunity to tell Keyswide stories and to suggest how they might be told along the Scenic Highway long before all the interpretive elements are built. For instance, a kiosk might include blown-up photos mounted on foam core to display the history of fishing, fishermen lore, and steps currently being taken to protect the waters in the Marine Sanctuaries.

- through high school might be invited to participate in a Key's-wide postcard contest. Images would feature landmarks the students believe define the Keys. The tag line on the back of each postcard would include a sentence about why the student chose that landmark. The postcards can be make available at festivals and programs, with people invited to write about their favorite Keys experience creating a virtual scrapbook for display that underscores the powerful sense of place most residents and visitors associate with the Keys. The postcards, in turn, can inform images that might be selected for public art projects at rest stops along the Scenic Highway.
- Significant Stories Visitors to festivals and events could be invited to record their Keys' story, creating an audio database of informative and powerful messages about what makes the Keys special and why they should be preserved. These messages can, in turn, inform interpretation at permanent sites along the Scenic Highway.
- Varied Volunteers Local conservation and historic organizations can be invited to provide volunteers to talk about how their organization contributes to the Keys sense of place, and the growing sense of environmental stewardship.

- Tracking Treasure Troves Different organizations can create a type of Keys treasure hunt, where visitors, using their cell phones, can call a telephone number and select an option to hear more information or personal stories about a particular site. Each organization, under the umbrella of a unifying symbol such as a bold coral arrow-like symbol, can participate as it chooses to. The treasure hunt's theme would help visitors understand the importance of ecosystems both on land and underwater, and their role at various sites around the Keys in preserving or destroying habitat.
- West pastime dressing up as someone else
   participants would be invited to dress-up as a
  historical Keys character and tell that person's
  story in a location historically related to the
  individual. The contest might last a week or
  two, allowing visitors to go to multiple sites to
  see and hear each story. Contest judges would
  establish criteria related to historical accuracy and
  fostering an understanding of man's impact on
  the land and water. While Ernest Hemmingway
  look-a-like contests are appropriate for Key
  West, Marathon might become known for Henry
  Flagler re-enactors, or Key Largo for die-hard
  environmentalists.

Each of these ideas – and many more will emerge – provides opportunities to test out interpretive ideas, collect stories to ground the interpretation as it is developed, and create excitement about the Scenic Highway. Perhaps most importantly these early programs provide opportunities to use the three themes of the Scenic Highway – Ecology, History and Culture – as a jumping off point for telling stories, engaging audiences, and teaching sustainability. In the process, stories will be gathered, images developed, collective memories created, and a growing attachment to the Scenic Highway fostered.









## IMPLEMENTATION PLAN



CHAPTER SIX

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## IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

## A. Overview

The Implementation Plan is designed around five action planning elements:

- 1. The Governance Plan
- 2. The Administration Plan
- 3. The Marketing Plan
- 4. The Construction Plan
- 5. The Funding Plan

Implementation is predicated on collaborations and partnerships with organizations in the Keys. Each recommendation will need to be discussed and reviewed with potential partners. As agreements are reached, the Plan will need to be refined and revised. Recommendations outlined here serve as a departure point; while preliminary conversations have been held with potential partners, the Plan cannot detail all the negotiations that will necessarily occur during implementation.



## **B.** The Governance Plan

The Scenic Highway will continue to be supported by a grassroots-based advisory group. What began as the Scenic Highways Advisory Group (SHAG) will evolve into the Corridor Management Entity (CME), an independent 501(c)3 able to enter into collaborations and partnerships with organizations also involved in the Scenic Highway.

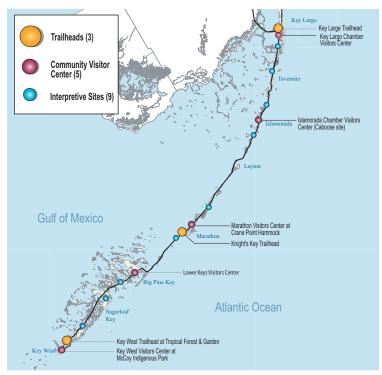
The CME will be comprised of volunteers from the community, representatives from local community organizations, business owners, agency representatives, and representatives of various charitable organizations in the area. The CME will initiate, coordinate and monitor plans, strategies, programs, and events of the Corridor Management Plan. Members of the CME will provide technical advise in areas of planning, engineering, architecture, economics and environmental management, as appropriate to that member.

The Monroe County Scenic Highways Coordinator, a paid member of the Monroe County Planning Office, will advise the group on administrative issues and act as a liaison with the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT). FDOT's Scenic Highways Coordinator will act as a liaison between the Monroe County Scenic Highways Coordinator and the state of Florida Scenic Highways Program and the National Scenic Byways program.

The Florida Department of Transportation will assist community organizations in developing grants to the National Scenic Byways Program for infrastructure funding. Maintaining and programming of the Scenic Highway components will then become the responsibility of local organizations.

The following collaborations are being considered to manage the Trailheads, Community Visitor Centers, Community Interpretive Centers, Rest Areas, and Bike Stops.













#### **Corridor Trailhead Stations**

Key Largo: The Department of Environmental Protection, Office of Greenways and Trails has partial funding through the Enhancement Work Program to build a Key Largo Corridor Trailhead Station. The project is slated to go to design in July 2006, with a projected opening date of 2009. Preliminary plans call for a small, un-staffed interpretive center on the ground floor with offices on the second floor. In addition, visitors will have access to an observation tower and can take guided tours of the garden. A small parking lot will accommodate travelers seeking orientation information, and permitted long-term parking for bike-riders on a multi-day trip. A collaboration with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Commission to include interpretation about the Crocodile Refuge is being explored.

**Key West:** Key West Tropical Forest and Garden has already submitted an application to the Scenic Byways program for design and construction drawings for a new entry, parking, bike paths and visitor center to serve as the Trailhead. Visitors will be able to park their vehicle or bike, obtain information on all Scenic Highway facilities and attractions, and enjoy one of the nation's most important and unique environmental sites, a tropical forest and garden.

The Key West Tropical Forest and Garden is the only tropical forest and garden in the continental United States. It is home to over 70 threatened or endangered species of flora and fauna and a major birding site.

#### **Community Visitor Centers**

Each Community Visitor Center will be managed by a different entity, as appropriate for that community. The following is being explored:

Key Largo: Chamber of Commerce Islamorada: City of Islamorada

Marathon: Florida Keys Land and Sea Trust at Crane Point

Lower Keys: Friends and Volunteers of Refuges

Key West: McCoy Indigenous Park

**Key Largo:** The Chamber of Commerce is interested in managing the Visitor Center in tandem with its existing Visitor Center. They have been in the same site for ten years, and have offered tourism information in Key Largo for thirty years. Discussions are in the preliminary phase.

**Islamorada:** The City of Islamorada has expressed interest in managing the Visitor Center. Discussions are in the preliminary phase.

Marathon: Florida Keys Land and Sea Trust at Crane Point Hammock is interested in managing a Visitor Center. A beautiful preserve, they are in the process of becoming an eco-center. Preliminary questions include determining how they can expand parking, restrooms, and other visitor amenities. In addition, they would like to ensure the collaboration builds on their mission-related strengths of education and preservation, and provides support in areas in which they do not have clear expertise – providing tourism-related support to visitors.

Lower Keys: The Friends and Volunteers of Refuges (FA-VOR) provide support for four wildlife refuges, including the Key Deer, Crocodile Lake, Great White Heron, and Key West National Wildlife Refuges. They currently maintain a high visibility bookstore and education center in the Winn Dixie Plaza on Big Pine Key. While some might argue this is not an ideal location for a Visitor Center, space is limited on Big Pine Key and the shopping center is a highly visible community hub. FAVOR is interested in managing the Visitor Center, either in the Winn Dixie Plaza or on another site, as it dovetails with their aspirations to expand and provide better interpretation of the Refuges, particularly Key Deer. A partnership might also include the National Key Deer Refuge. At the moment, they are without a manager. Due to heavy flooding in last year's hurricanes, they are rethinking the location of administrative offices and the Visitor Center.

**Key West:** McCoy Indigenous Park is managed by the City of Key West. It is already exploring upgrades to the site, including upgrading restrooms, the parking lot, and the pavilion. There are two options for the Visitor Center: there is room on site for a purpose-built building, or the existing pavilion can be enclosed. In addition, funding will need to consider plantings.

The Park is a major birding destination. It sits on the site of the old City dump, and before that served as Key West's cemetery. The site also includes some of the Key West salt flats used for harvesting salt. The historic African-American Burial ground and the West Martello Battery are also interpreted here.

## **Community Interpretive Sites**

Each Community Interpretive Site will be developed and managed by the Department of Environmental Protection in collaboration with county, state, federal, or private entities as appropriate. Details on each proposed Site are still being worked out. For instance discussions are underway with the State Conservation Commission to create limited parking to allow for passive use at Dove Creek. Indian Key Fill will undoubtedly involve a collaboration between the DEP, the Village of Islamorada, and the Park Service. Curry Hammock will involve the DEP and the State Park. Phase I for Knight's Key includes restoring areas damaged in the 2004 and 2005 hurricanes and building the foundation for the dock that will carry bicyclists to Little Duck Key; the DEP is currently seeking funding for Phase I. Phase II will include parking, picnic tables, and interpretation. Summerland Seafood will involve public amenities on the right-of-way or easements with the property owner, allowing the State to spend money for public amenities on private property.

## **Rest Stops**

The Rest Stops will be developed and managed by FDOT.

## **Bike Stop Facilities**

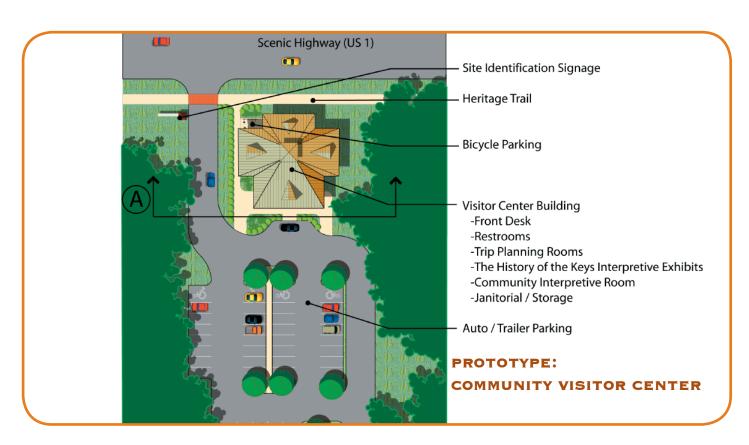
The Bike Stop Facilities will be developed and managed by the Department of Environmental Protection. Current plans include creating the Bike Stops at Tom Harbor Cut, Long Key Bridge, Spanish Harbor, Boca Chica, and Channel 5 or Channel 2.

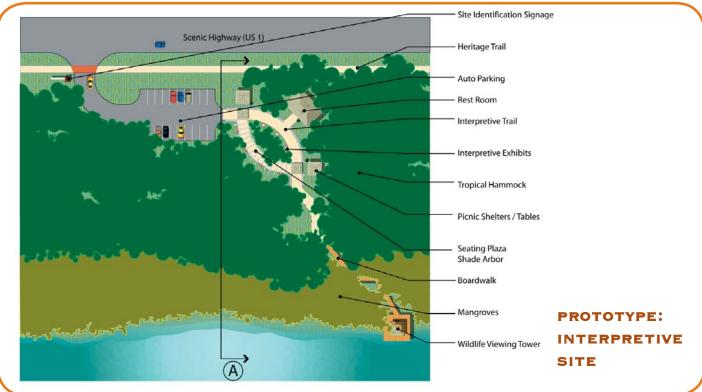


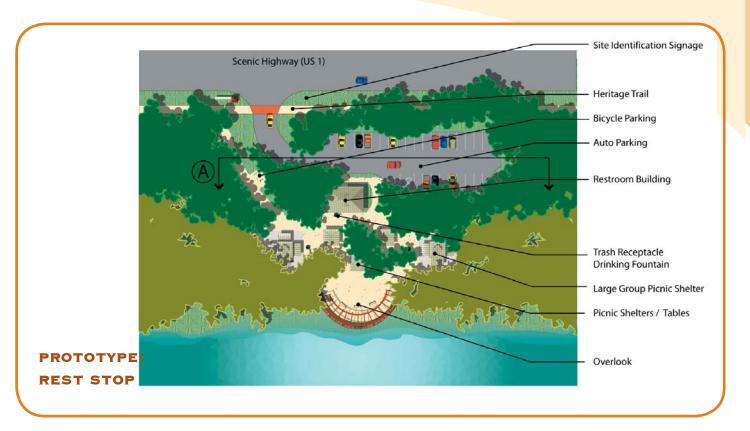


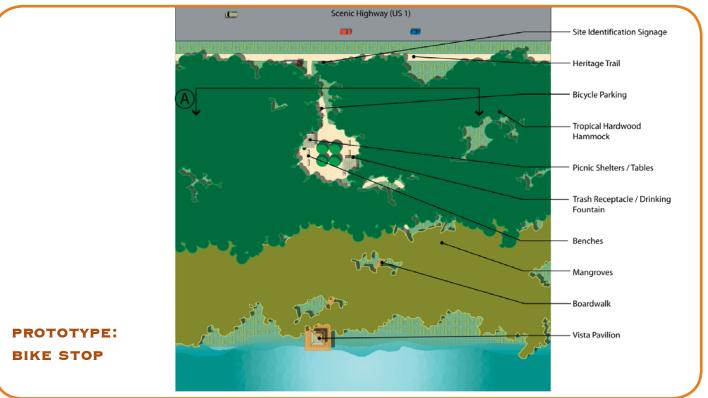












#### C. The Administration Plan

Each organization managing a Trail Head or Community Visitor Center will provide staff and will develop an appropriate operating program for the facility for which it is responsible. The recommendations below outline a minimum budget. It is premature to consider how activities at the entity will dovetail with other activities undertaken by the entity managing it, or ways in which existing staff might support the entity. It is assumed some of the funding will be met through grants.

The recommendations below reflect a future staffing level once recommendations outlined in this plan are fully implemented. It is assumed staffing and budgets will be initiated at more modest levels.

#### **Corridor Management Entity (CME)**

The Scenic Highway Advisory Group will become the Corridor Management Entity (CME) for the Scenic Highway. The CME will initiate, coordinate and monitor plans, strategies, programs, and events of the Corridor Management Plan. It is anticipated that its role will evolve over time, helping create the Scenic Highway and its interpretation in the first years, and sustaining it in the long-term.

The FDOT cannot provide staff, programming, or management funding for the CME. However, the CME, a private non-profit organization, can raise its own funds. Experience in other Scenic Highway programs strongly suggests that – in the long-term – the CME will need to fund and develop its own staff so as to be an effective partner with other organizations involved in the Scenic Highway.

The CME will serve as a clearinghouse for funding opportunities for all entities along the Scenic Highway, identifying potential grants and passing that information along to the various entities, who can than apply directly or cooperatively for funding. The CME will play a role in balancing disparities in organizational capacity between organizations involved in the Scenic Highway, by providing advice and information about potential funding sources.

The CME will serve a critical advisory role in the development, design, and building of infrastructure, in collaboration with Monroe County, FDOT, the Department of

Environmental Protection (DEP), and any other appropriate agencies. The CME will coordinate projects with funding entities and bring in partners and collaborators as appropriate.

The CME will not be developing any facilities. Their role will be to provide continuity with this plan as each of the corridor partners develop the individual facilities. (Chambers of Commerce, Key West Tropical Forest, Crane Point Hammock, FDEP, FDOT, etc.) The CME will coordinate activities between programs, and develop and promote ecotourism marketing for the Scenic Highway. The CME may choose to create a Friends Group for fundraising and to coordinate activities such as tours, clean-ups, or festivals. During the development phase, the CME will be responsible for coordinating the development of public art components at selected Rest Stops and Bicycle Stops. It is assumed the Monroe County Arts Council will also be involved.

A major role of the CME will be to encourage the development of programs and festivals, and to collaborate with existing programs and festivals so as to attract visitors and teach them about the many opportunities along the Scenic Highway. Activities will include bike or kayak races, geocaching, development of podcasts and other audio-interpretive devices, web site development, tour packages, brochures, and other marketing opportunities.

The CME will encourage area organizations to collaborate in providing programming at the Community Interpretive Sites. Examples of programs include:

- Tours of Native Plants at the Dove Creek Preserve by the Florida Native Plant Society
- An overview of the Keys marine ecosystem at Curry Hammock by the Florida Keys Marine Sanctuary
- Bird watching led by the Audubon Society at Blue Hole
- Local history talk by retired fishermen at Summerland Seafood
- There are hundreds of ideas of collaborative programs. This preliminary list simply suggests the type of activity possible.

The CME will have two primary responsibilities in order to be successful in the Keys. A responsibility to the local community to highlight and encourage cultural and interpretive development and a responsibility to local businesses to encourage visitor participation.

The CME will be responsible for keeping the Scenic Highway website updated.

The CME will coordinate appropriate maintenance of all Scenic Highway facilities with the overseeing authority of each entity.

The CME may choose to play a role in providing training in interpretation or guest services for the Trail Heads, Community Visitor Centers, and private tour operators to ensure a consistently accurate story is told throughout the Keys. As a first step the CME might provide interpretive booklets to ensure that the Scenic Highway story is told consistently. A long-term goal of providing a tour-operator training program is a major undertaking and it is recommended the CME begin by creating an assessment of needs, and develop a training plan in close collaboration with other organizations.

The following budget provides for the **initial establishment** of the CME. This staffing level will enable the CME to establish and organize itself, begin grantwriting initiatives, and launch an initial marketing campaign.

Staff:	# FTE
CME Manager	1
Office Assistant	1
Total FTE	2

Operating Programmatic Budget	
Payroll Related*	95,000
Printing/Promotional Materials	30,000
Phones/Computers	15,000
Office Supplies	15,000
Website and media promotional materials	25,000
Maintenance/utilities	10,000
Misc.	10,000
Total	200,000

The following budget describes a long-term vision for the CME; optimistically within **five years**. Three additional staff positions are added to enable the CME to expand its role and strengthen its programs. Note the addition of special events to the annual operating budget. This staffing level assumes the CME, as a private non-profit, has evolved and created organizational capacity.

Staff:	# FTE
CME Manager	1
CME Grant Writer/Fundraiser	1
CME Program Coordinator	1
CME Marketing Coordinator	1
Office Assistant	1
Total FTE	5

Operating Programmatic Budget	
Payroll Related*	185,000
Printing/Promotional Materials	30,000
Phones/Computers	14,000
Office Supplies	15,000
Contractors for events	20,000
Event related expenses	45,000
Website and media promotional materials	25,000
Maintenance/utilities	10,000
Misc.	16,000
Total	360,000

\*Note that staff cannot be funded through the Scenic Highway Program.

#### **Trailhead Visitor Centers**

The Trailhead Visitor Centers will focus on promoting bikeriding and kayaking. They will develop events and programs that support low impact touring of the Keys, and eco-tourism education. Activities might include:

- Geocaching
- Downloading podcasts or purchasing audio-interpretation
- Creating "destination" rides in collaboration with other entities in the Keys
- Promotion and marketing of the Scenic Highway and its resources
- Leading tours and rides

Hours of Operation	Open 7 days a week, 9 am to 5 pm

Staff:	# FTE
Site Manager	1
Desk Attendants	2
Maintenance	.5
Total FTE	3.5

Operating programmatic budget	
Payroll Related	80,000
Printing/Promotional Materials	16,000
Phones/Computers	8,000
Office Supplies Contractors for events	3,000
Contractors for events	8,000
Event related expenses	8,000
Maintenance/Utilities	12,000
Website and development of promotional	10,000
materials	-
Misc.	5,000
Total	150,000

<sup>\*</sup>Note that staff cannot be funded through the Scenic Highway Program.

#### **Community Visitor Centers**

The Community Visitor Centers will focus on promoting ecotourism activities in that community. They will develop events and programs that support low impact touring of their community, and eco-tourism education. Activities might include:

- Geocaching
- Down-loading podcasts or purchasing audio-interpretation
- Creating "destination" rides in collaboration with other entities in the Keys
- Promotion and marketing of the Scenic Highway and its resources
- Promoting events in that community
- Distributing information about alternative activities in the community
- Leading tours and rides
- Creating collaborations with kayak concessionaires, bike shops, and promoting alternative tours of the community
- Developing and promoting partnerships with area businesses and non-profits

Hours of Operation	Open 7 days a week, 9 am to 5 pm

Staff:	# FTE
Site Manager	1
Program Coordinator	1
Desk Attendant/Program Assistants	3
Maintenance	.5
Total FTE	5.5

Operating programmatic budget	
Payroll Related	120,000
Printing/Promotional Materials	20,000
Phones/Computers	12,000
Office Supplies	4,000
Contractors for events	12,000
Event related expenses	17,000
Maintenance/Utīlities	15,000
Website and development of promotional	17,000
materials	
Misc.	8,000
Total	225,000

<sup>\*</sup>Note that staff cannot be funded through the Scenic Highway Program.

## **Community Interpretive Sites, Rest Stops, Bike Stop Facilities**

No staff will be assigned full time to each of these facilities, and it is not anticipated that the managing authority will develop programs specific to that facility. It is, however, anticipated, that the managing authority may choose to hold its events and programs at one of the facilities.

## **D.** The Marketing Plan

It is recommended the Corridor Management Entity take responsibility for developing and managing the marketing, interpretation, and way-finding collateral materials. They should work closely with the Trailhead and Community Visitor Centers, Tourist Development Council, Chambers of Commerce, Monroe County, Municipalities, area non-profits, and tourism-related businesses to create synergy among their marketing materials. In particular, it is recommended:

- CME should partner with the TDC to develop and manage the Scenic Highway website. It should include listings of all opportunities, events, and businesses associated with the traveler along the Highway.
- CME should partner with area non-profits and Chambers of Commerce to develop interpretive and marketing material including:
  - Brochures outlining bike trails and amenities of interest to bike riders along the trail.
  - Brochures outlining kayak trails and amenities of interest to kayakers within an easy walk of kayak put-ins.
  - Podcasts and other audio-interpretation, providing the car traveler, bike rider, kayaker, or walker with stories, music, and narrative about the ecology, history, and culture of the Keys.
  - Advertisements in national and Florida media related to festivals and programs.
  - Kiosks at the Miami, Marathon, and Key West airports.
- CME should partner with area non-profits and Chambers of Commerce to develop activities of interest to bike riders, kayakers and walkers such as:
- Eco festivals
- Bike or kayak races
- Bike or kayak rides
- Alternative travel programs
- Geocaching
- Fitness challenges
- Treasure trails

• CME should develop a Scenic Highway Passport Program, in which visitors are encouraged to visit as many entities along the Highway as possible. At each site, they collect a "stamp" in their "passport." A certain number of stamps wins a prize collectable at the Community Visitor Centers. The Passport might include information about the many ecological, historic, and cultural resources along the Highway, birding lists, games for children to play in the car or at the sites, discount coupons for area businesses, calendar of events, and ways in which travelers can minimize their impact on the Keys.

While each entity responsible for a Trailhead Visitor Center or a Community Visitor Center will provide programming and marketing for the facility, it is recommended the CME serve a coordinating role, and shoulder the majority of that work, ensuring collaboration and synergy along the Scenic Highway.



## E. Transportation Conditions and Guidance

## **Scenic Highway Interpretive Master Plan Transportation Overview**

The transportation focus of this interpretive master plan is meant to identify key issues along the US 1 Overseas Scenic Highway and to provide general guidance for further action by public agencies to plan for and make the most of both public and private investment along the corridor. Transportation elements identified in the following section can greatly enhance the quality of the experience of the highway for all users. These elements are targeted to building awareness of highway aesthetics and wayfinding opportunities, providing greater safety and connectivity for non-auto modes, and planning for safer site access that relies less on multiple driveways and preserves capacity.

Issues and treatment options will vary according to the development patterns and land features adjacent to the road. These patterns and features make up the road's context and are organized along the Florida Keys Overseas Highway as follows:

- Rural or Sensitive Low Density Areas
- Roadside Destination Areas ,including
  - Scenic Overlooks
  - Strip Commercial Businesses/Centers
  - Tourist Attractions
- Village & Town Centers
- Suburban Strip Corridor

The US 1 Overseas Highway presents unique challenges. As the only contiguous link between and through the Keys, its 108 miles must perform as a major highway for long distance travel and provide the only access to much of its narrow stretches of adjacent land. The road carries four through lanes for most of its length, with center turn lanes, curb and gutter in some urbanized areas or shoulders with sidepaths dominating most of the landside highway. Few of its 42 bridges are wide enough for safe bicycle travel. For residents living and working in neighborhoods and business districts, the highway is "Main Street", sometimes seemingly filled with tourists, fishing boats in tow. For the recreational bicyclists it offers a unique ride through stretches of seascape vistas and roadside attractions. For the visitor, its mile marker nomenclature provides a simple system for tracking distance and self navigation. The many varied users suggest that improvements along the corridor should balance through vehicle traffic with recreation and locally circulating motorized, bicycle and pedestrian traffic. Challenges to achieving this balance are as follows:

- US 1's multiplicity of function and limited land to expand or offer alternative routes presents unique problems and may require untested solutions
- The Overseas Heritage Trail presents an opportunity to change the corridor's auto focus to a more multimodal focus, but presents safety concerns, especially at access points where speed differentials are greatest.
- Tourist destinations and scenic overlooks need consistent wayfinding signage and special attention to multimode conflict points.

#### **Opportunities for Change**

Opportunities to change the corridor and reinforce its scenic character will derive from public projects and guidance for private investment. Several examples that could begin to build a more attractive and efficient corridor include:

#### **Private Redevelopment**

Parking lots and under-performing centers will overtime present opportunities for redevelopment. In the communities of Islamorada and Marathon, corridor and area plans should lay out a vision of opportunities to create a grid of streets and managed intersections with less parking at the road edge. These plans will not only improve the appearance of US 1 in its urban village and suburban strip areas but will improve circulation by light modes (auto and bicycle). Plans could offer cyclists safer alternatives to the highway, and focus auto access to controlled entry points of the main highway, preserving capacity for through traffic. **Commercial** 

#### **Frontage Improvements**

Permits for expanding or improving private commercial properties offer another opportunity to organize access and parking and provide pedestrian and bicycle amenities such as bike racks, wide-shaded sidewalks, and sheltered bus waiting areas.

#### **Bridge Reconstruction Projects**

The Overseas Highway Heritage Trail implementation's most significant challenges occur at the many bridges through the Keys. The Jewfish Creek Bridge currently under construction and other planned highway projects create opportunities to advance the goal of a contiguous trail along the corridor and connections to planned trailheads. These projects should be planned with particular attention to community involvement and local plans coordination.

#### **Trail Development**

Plans to implement the Overseas Heritage Trail Plan present not only an opportunity to build a contiguous length of trail, but also to correct alignments and driveway conflicts that currently present safety hazards to bicyclists. Monroe County and municipal planning can identify key access points and roadway accommodation as part of a complete bicycle network.









## **Context Typologies**

#### Rural & Environmentally Sensitive Areas

The Keys experience for drivers and cyclists includes long stretches of uninterrupted highway. Often these areas are constrained by narrow land mass or sensitive environmental features. Any side trail in these areas should be a minimum of 12 feet from the paved roadway where possible.

#### Scenic Overlooks & Commercial Centers Roadside Destinations

Business and service areas along the road will attract both cyclists and motorists. Site access often relies on driveways directly from the highway. Driveway locations, width and entry radii, and parking should be designed to minimize conflicts and create a comfortable experience for both users. Landscaping should enhance the roadway edge and preserve scenic views. Location of driveways for left-turn access and adequate sight distance for highway reentry are key aspects of safety through design. Consideration should be given to alignment and spacing of driveways relative to existing pedestrian and bicyclist travel patterns.

## Unexpected Access Conflicts: Commercial Driveways

Conflict points between modes should have slower turning radii and orient bicyclists closer to the edge of travel way at intersections. This will place them in the sight line of the motorist and/or prevent the cyclist from having to look over his shoulder to scan for oncoming vehicles. Alternatively the trail should be pulled well away from the road with advance warning of a potential conflict.

## **Roadside Commercial Strip**

While prevalent throughout the Keys, roadside services and businesses provide parking buffered from the travel way with shoulder, at times marked for two-way bicycle traffic, requiring motorists to back into highway traffic to exit a parking space. Conversions of this development pattern will require work with property owners on a case by case basis, especially during trail development.









## Guidance: Barriers at the Road Edge

In areas not requiring land access, where right-of-way does not permit separation from higher speed vehicle travel, attractive stormwater-permeable barriers should be considered. These barriers are just one example of an opportunity to integrate art into infrastructure. Designs that express unique characteristics of places along the corridor though area artists and administered through a public arts program is one way to reinforce community identity.

## Unexpected Access Conflicts: Rest Area Parking

At the point where mode conflicts occur, speed differential should be minimal for maximum safety. This photo shows how a vehicle leaving the roadway could easily turn into the travel path of a cyclist with neither operator aware of the potential hazard and both arriving from a single-use free flow environment. Optimally this driveway and cycle path would be swapped so any conflict point would occur at lower speeds and where both drivers could anticipate the meeting and the necessity to yield.

## Guidance: Signage responds to unique situations

Signage for both trail users and motorists should provide advance notice of an unexpected hazard. The Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devises has a procedure for introducing new signage if appropriate.

## Guidance Mixing Modes: Separate & Create Hierarchy

Ideally space for each transportation mode will be located based on speed with non-auto modes, where possible buffered from moving vehicles. This European example demonstrates the ideal condition where user space is organized according to a strict hierarchy.









CHAPTER SIX: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

## **Villages and Towns**

## Organize Paths & Parking Access

Tavernier is an example of a village scale with buildings close to the street where pedestrian circulation and access are high priorities. Planning should guide organizing the space between the building and the street according to traditional urban zones. These urban zones must clearly define the building frontage area that might include outside dining or display, the pedestrian walk zone, the bicycle path zone, the parking zone, and the street furniture zone. Right-of-way limitations may not permit the inclusion of on-street bicycle lanes on US 1, however to promote bicycling as urban transportation, the concept should be considered.

## Guidance: Landscaped Buffer Zones and **Crossing Islands**

Installing pedestrian refuge islands where roadway width allows can signal to the motorist that pedestrians may be present and are expected in the right-of-way. This also eases roadway crossing for pedestrians. Designing medians with adequate space for landscaping improves the roadway character for all users. Trees can provide a vertical edge to reduce the highway scale and feel helping to lower speeds through urban villages and towns.

#### Service Road: Path Comfort

Service roads are more comfortable to bicyclists in this environment due to low speed and volume of vehicles and much higher visibility by motorists than that along the path running closer to the highway. In widely paved sections like the first photo, improving cross street definition and user priority at the approaches might be considered to channel driver and user interaction. The second photo demonstrates an opportunity to create a formal pathway across the local street with reduced conflict points for both pedestrians and cyclists.

#### Guidance: Low Speed/Volume Roads

Parallel low speed and low volume roads may provide an alternative route for the Overseas Heritage trail. In Marathon, where bicycling has the potential to serve residents, US 1 should be improved with single direction marked bicycle lanes on each side of the street. Moving recreational riders to lower speed/volume alternative routes will improve safety as well as the riding experience.



#### Consider Pedestrian "Desire Lines"

Informal pedestrian crossings on US 1 are created when neighborhoods lie on the opposite side of the road from schools, commercial centers, and other community destinations. Combining access to bring traffic to a single point that could meet signal warrants should include an evaluation of pedestrian "desire lines". Creating marked crossings along the highway will be unlikely and unsafe unless they are combined with a signalized intersection. Planning for formal/legal safe crossing zones at greater densities in village settings will help to reduce unsafe pedestrian behavior.





## **Suburban Strip**

## Mixed ROW in high Speed/Volume Zone

The community of Marathon provides a major opportunity to better define the roadway edge, user zones and in some areas, more controlled access points and a center median. In suburban areas where parking dominates the street edge, the environment for pedestrians and bicyclists is brutal. A lack of trees at the road edge misses the need to shade pedestrians and reduce highway scale.





## Internally-oriented Circulation

Drive isles in large shopping centers can be designed to promote non-auto circulation. In areas where bicycles are a common form of transportation for seasonal restaurant workers or store clerks, seeing bicycles in parking lots is not unusual. These drive isles can also begin to form a grid for side road site access, especially when coordinated over a series of commercial centers and lined up across local streets to create a controllable intersection.



## Guidance: Mark and Distinguish Two-way/ Multi-Use

In suburban and urban settings two way markings and vertical trail definition will be vital to maximizing safety. This example from Belgium uses both vertical indicators such as curb height, trees and bollards and horizontal indicators including directional striping and pavement texture to distinguish the bicycle zone. Colored asphalt that has been recommended for trail improvements in the Keys should be combined with well-maintained striping to visually distinguish the bicycle zone.





CHAPTER SIX: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

#### Guidance: On Road Lanes in the Suburban Strip

Suburban and Village areas should establish and maintain standard on-road bicycle lanes. These lanes offer the greatest visibility to the cyclist and permit safe riding in traffic by more experienced riders. Marked lanes on US 1 and major collectors as part of a local network will enhance cycling as a choice transportation mode.

#### Scenic Overlooks: Bridge Ends

The approaches to bridges along the Overseas Highway present a major attraction to motorists as rest areas and observation points. The rapid changes in grade making them attractive to perched sightseers, also makes them potentially dangerous to access. Attention to details such as sight distance and protected turns is important. Equally important is offering, where possible, alternatives for pedestrian to cross to the opposite side and avoids this hazardous highway environment.

## **Highway Aesthetics:**

## Match to Scenic Beauty

The unique vistas of sea, sky and nature found on the Keys should be respected and enhanced at the roadway edge.

Utilitarian roadway elements currently found within the US 1 right-of-way could be found at the industrial edges of any major US city. The following elements are examples of opportunities to begin to change the way these elements are placed in the landscape and how they contribute to the value of the corridor.

## Guidance: Walls, Rails and Safety Barrier

Roadway elements found elsewhere and in the Keys present ideas for changing the approach to safety elements. Some of these elements can be artistically inspired. Those with a critical function, such as well placed guardrail to protect the motorist from bridge ends and drop-offs, can be purchased as stock items with proven performance qualities at a slightly higher cost.



## Guidance: Pedestrian Crossing Enhancements

In the suburban environment, pedestrian crossings should be highly visible, occur at more frequent intervals, relate to destinations that straddle the roadway, and be protected with signal control and a raised median where possible. Driveways directly onto the highway should be eliminated over time and turning radii for vehicles minimized. Since boat trailers are a major fixture throughout the Keys, intersections that must accommodate them should be targeted for special treatment that can be easily identified by the hauler.



## Guidance: Grade-separated pedestrian passages

Bridge spans on the approaches present an alternative to crossing the highway at grade. In this plan for Knight's Key at the Seven Mile Bridge, the space is interesting and adequate for a pedestrian path below the structure.



## Safety Barrier/Roadside Furniture

Materials and placement of roadside furniture in the Keys are inconsistent with the scenic character of the road. A more intentional placement of barrier and context appropriate materials selection is needed and encouraged.











## **Bus Stop Location & Amenity**

The minimalist nature of bus waiting areas in their access, comfort, shade potential, customer information and overall amenity presents an excellent, low cost opportunity to enhance the corridor for non-auto users. The photo at right raises questions of location, personal safety and quality of bus service available in the Keys.

## Landscape buffers

Landscaping in the roadway environment can provide important spatial definition for users. It can shade and cool a brutal South Florida heated roadway environment. It can create a psychological barrier to motorized traffic and provide a vertical frame to orient motorists.

#### Guidance: Establish/Maintain Wayfinding System

The Florida Keys mile marker is more than a navigational tool for the motorist. It is an address for businesses along the highway. A more consistent and visible street element can add to its use as a wayfinding element.







## Guidance: Provide Place-based Stop Amenities

Bus and waiting shelters can be distinctive roadside features and add a defining element to community architecture. These shelters are placed at a highly visible intersection at the heart of town, offering surveillance by surrounding building occupants. Shelters should be placed and designed for the comfort and security of users waiting inside, and with safe access to adjacent businesses and neighborhoods

## Guidance: Landscape buffers

Examples of low shrubs in Key West are similar to the type that might be considered to buffer the Overseas Heritage Trail from the highway. Maintaining visibility either over or under the landscaping will preserve views and sight lines. This stand of modestly scaled trees on Matecumbe Key is a unique softening and shading element that can be a model for roadside planting.

## Guidance: Maintain Markings & Clear Surface

Side paths typically present maintenance challenges as they are not brushed of debris through auto use. In the Keys, sections of the exiting trail are plagued with pea gravel migrating from the road shoulder. As this material presents a hazard for cyclists, the practice of using it at the road edge should be discontinued and replaced with landscaping.







# **Local Precedents for Multimodal Transportation Environments**

Key West and its walkable downtown create a unique environment for residents and tourists alike. As the Keys changes over time it offers a model of transportation elements that should help to guide mobility options in urbanizing areas. Each of the Key's unique identities can potentially be laid across an urban design format that brings more of its people safely to its streets and civic spaces.

## **Recommended Actions**

## Establish a corridor preservation program

- Plan for access consolidation
- Plan for increasing use of side-paths by bicyclists
- Work with jurisdictions to plan for parking & access management to improve safety
- Understand local circulation systems to reduce reliance on US 1 especially for "light modes"

## Provide consistency and maintenance of roadway elements

- Mark and Sign all crossing points
- Establish caution signage
- Enhance mile-markers
- Regularly move debris and pea gravel to maintain safe side paths

## Select roadway elements that reflect US 1's Scenic Highway designation

- Include guardrail, bus shelters, roadside furniture
- Consider roadside trees, landscape buffers
- Provide edge barriers to multiuse trail at selected locations

#### **Construction Cost Estimate**

The following are construction cost estimates for each corridor plan element. There is also a construction phasing estimate which outlines the elements of two construction phases for the completion of the Scenic Highway Interpretive Plan and its built environment.

1	) (	Corri	dor	raill	nead	Stati	ions (	(2)	

Total	\$1,860,000.00
Interior Exhibits	\$ 150,000.00
Trailhead Building	\$1,500,000.00
Site Facilities	\$ 75,000.00
Site Signage	\$ 15,000.00
Landscaping	\$ 45,000.00
Roadways, Parking, Utilities	\$ 75,000.00

#### 2. Knights Key Trailhead

1. Key Largo (FDEP Site)

Roadways, Parking, Utilities	\$ 125,000.00
Landscaping	\$75,000.00
Site Signage	\$ 45,000.00
Site Facilities	\$ 25,000.00
Trailhead Building	\$1,500,000.00
Interior Exhibits	\$150,000.00

## Total \$1,920,000.00

#### 3. Key West Tropical Forest and Garden

\$150,000.00
\$1,500,000.00
\$ 25,000.00
\$ 45,000.00
\$75,000.00
\$ 125,000.00

Trailhead Centers Total \$ 5,700,000.00

## 2) Visitor Orientation Centers (5)

- 1. Key Largo Chamber of Commerce
- 2. Caboose site in Islamorada
- 3. Museums and Nature Center of Crane Point
- 4. FDEP property US 1 at Sugarloaf Blvd.
- 5. McCoy Indigenous Park in Key West

Doodyyaya Darking Utilities	¢ 150 000 00
Roadways, Parking, Utilities	\$ 150,000.00
Landscaping	\$ 75,000.00
Site Signage	\$ 25,000.00
Site Facilities	\$ 75,000.00
Visitor Orientation Building	\$1,500,000.00
Interior Exhibits	\$ 500,000.00

## **Visitor Orientation Centers**

**Total** 

Total \$ 11,625,000.00

## 3) Community Interpretive Sites (10)

- 1. Rock Harbor
- 2. Sandy Sprunt Dove Creek Preserve
- 3. Windley Key State Geological Site
- 4. Indian Key Fill
- 5. Curry Hammock State Park
- 6. Ohio Key
- 7. Blue Hole

\$2,325,000.00

- 8. Summerland Seafood
- 9. Sugarloaf Boulevard

Roadways, Parking, Utilities	\$ 100,000.00
Landscaping	\$75,000.00
Site Signage	\$50,000.00
Site Facilities	\$650,000.00
Restroom Building	\$350,000.00
Interpretive Exhibits	\$300,000.00

Total \$1,525,000.00

## Community Interpretive Sites

Total \$ 15,250,000.00

## **4) Rest Areas (16)**

- 1. John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park
- 2. Founders Park
- 3. Green Turtle Hammock
- 4. Anne's Beach Rest Area
- 5. Long Key State Park
- 6. Long Key Bridge Rest Area
- 7. Grassy Key Rest Area
- 8. Veterans Memorial Rest Area
- 9. Bahia Honda State Park
- 10. Historic U.S. 1 Rest Area
- 11. Swimming Hole Rest Area
- 12. Ramrod Key Rest Area
- 13. Spoonbill Sound Rest Area
- 14. Perky's Bat Tower
- 15. Rockland Channel Rest Area
- 16. Boca Chica Channel Rest Area

\$1,200,000.0
\$50,000.00
\$350,000.00
\$350,000.00
\$50,000.00
\$150,000.00
\$250,000.00

**Rest Areas Total** \$ 19,200,000.00

#### **5) Bike Stops (11)**

- 1. Sunset Point Park Bike Stop
- 2. Harry Harris Park Bike Stop
- 3. Old Settlers Park
- 4. Tavernier Creek Bike Stop
- 5. Matecumbe Bight Bike Stop
- 6. Channel #2 Bike Stop
- 7. Layton Bike Stop
- 8. Dolphin Research Center Bike Stop
- 9. Little Duck Key Bike Stop
- 10. Spanish Harbor Bike Stop
- 11. Bay Point Park Bike Stop

Parking, Utilities	\$50,000.00
Landscaping	\$150,000.00
Site Signage	\$50,000.00
Site Facilities	\$350,000.00
Interpretive Exhibits	\$50,000.00

Total \$650,000.00

**Bike Stops Total** \$ 7,150,000.00

### 6) Airport Kiosks (3)

- 1. Miami International Airport
- 2. Key West International Airport
- 3. Marathon Airport

Interpretive Exhibits \$350,000.00

Total \$350,000.00

Airport Kiosks Total \$1,050,000.00

# Project Facilities Total \$ 59,975,000.00

## 7) The Construction Phasing Plan

#### Phase 1 (0-7 Years)

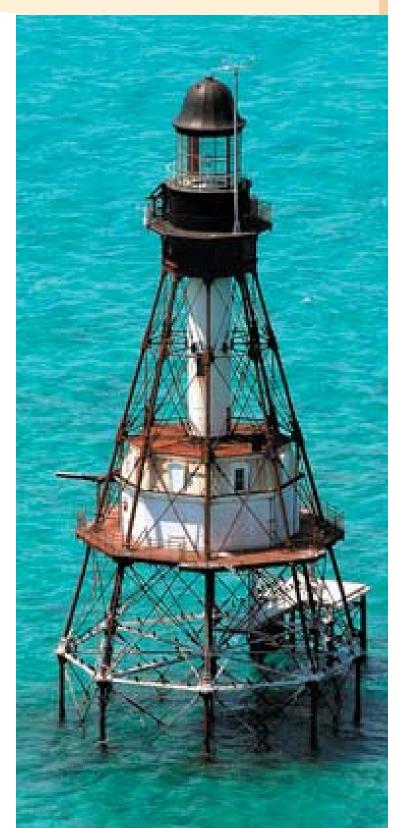
- 1. Land Acquisition
- 2. Grant Applications
- 3. Partnering Agreements
- 4. Internet Visitation Planner
- 5. Trip Planning Computer System
- 6. Bike Path Completion
- 7. Bike Stop Completion \$7,150,000.00 8. (3) Trailhead Facilities Completion \$5,700,000.00

#### Phase 1 Total Cost Estimate \$12,850,000.00

#### **Phase 2 (8-15 years)**

- 1. Continued Grants Application
- 2. Continued Land Acquisition
- 3. Continued Partnering Agreements
- 4. Mile Markers
- 5. Scenic Highway Signage
- 6. Visitor Orientation Centers Construction \$11,625,000.00 7. Community Interpretive Sites Constructed \$15,250,000.00 8. Renovation and Construction of Rest Areas \$19,200,000.00
- 9. Airport Kiosk Construction \$1,050,000.00

Phase 2 Cost Estimate \$47,125,000.00



#### The Funding Plan:

**Recreation Trails Program** 

Total Amount Available:

Level of Funding:

Web

Utilizing multiple funding sources has become the most tive way of maximizing the amount of funding a commun can obtain. Through planning and commitment, the idea "grant stacking" can be sued on virtually any project over time period. This philosophy is accomplished through a c nation of knowledge of different funding sources and how will react with a project's intent and time schedule.

Please find below a sampling of funding opportunities that might be available to Monroe County for completion of the project:

Recreation Trails Program	\$200,000
Transportation Enhancement Program	\$500,000
Florida Recreational Development Assistance	\$200,000
Land and Water Conservation Fund	\$200,000
Highway Beautification Program	\$300,000
Florida Forever (FCT)	\$6,600,000

effec- nity of er any combi- w they	Transportation Enhance Level of Funding: Total Amount Available: Maximum Grant Award:
at the	Matching Ratio (%): Type:

0,000	
0,000	
0,000	
0,000	
0,000	3.6
00,000	Management Agency:

Type:

	Transportation
Address:	605 Suwannee Street Tallahassee, FL 32399-0450
Phone:	850.410.5891

Maximum Grant Award:	\$200,000
Matching Ratio (%):	80/20
Type:	Provides funding for renovation of recreational trails and support facilities.
Management Agency:	Florida Department of Environmental Protection

March 2006

Approx. \$3 million

Federal

Management Agency:	Florida Department of
	<b>Environmental Protection</b>
	Office of Greenways and
	Trails
Address:	3900 Commonwealth Blvd.
	Tallahassee FL 32399

Phone:	850.488.3701

	Liiviioiiiiciitai i ioteetioii
	Office of Greenways and
	Trails
ress:	3900 Commonwealth Blvd
	Tallahassee FL 32399
ie:	850.488.3701
Address:	www.dep.state.fl.us

insportation Enhancemen	t Program May 2006	I
vel of Funding:	Local	L
al Amount Available:	\$3 million	Т

\$500,000 (Local)

ching Ratio (%):	No Match Required
:	Provides funding for transportation activities such

portation activities such
as pedestrian and bicycle
facilities, landscaping and
other beautification, acquisi-
tion of scene easements and
environmental mitigation.
J
Florida Department of

Transportation
605 Suwannee Street Tallahassee, FL 32399-0450

Phone:	850.410.5891	
Florida Recreational Development Assistance Sept. 2006		

Level of Funding:	State
Total Amount Available: Maximum Grant Award:	Not Yet Determined \$200,000
Matching Ratio (%):	50

For the acquisition of development of recreation facilities

Management Agency:	Florida Department of Environmental Protection

Commonwealth Blvd.
hassee, FL 32399
188.7846
dep.state.fl.us

Land and Water Conservatio	n Fund	March 2006	Florida Forever (FCT)
Level of Funding:	State		Level of Funding:

Total Amount Available:	Not Yet Determined	
Maximum Grant Award:	\$200,000	

Matching Ratio (%):	50
Type:	For grants to local govern- mental entities to acquire or

Management Agency:

Phone:

mental entities to acquire or develop land for public out door recreational purposes.
Florida Department of Environmental Protection

850.488.7846

Address:	3900 Commonwealth Blvd.
	Tallahassee, FL 32399

Web Address:	www.dep.state.fl.us

<b>Highway Beautification Program</b>		October 2006
Level of Funding:	State	
Total Amount Available:	\$3,00	0,000
Maximum Grant Award:	\$300,	000
Matching Ratio (%):	50/50	recommended

Type:	Funding for landscaping and
	other roadway beautification
	projects on State and Federa
	roadways.

Management Agency:	Florida Highway Beautifica-
	tion Council
	Florida Department of Trans-
	portation

605 Suwannee Street MS 37
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0450

Phone:	850.922.7205
Web Address:	www.dot.state.fl.us

Level of Funding:

Maximum Grant Award:

Phone:

Total Amount Available: \$66,000,000

May 2006

\$6.6 million

State

25-60 Matching Ratio (%):

Provides funding for Type: acquisition of land for conservation and parks.

Management Agency: Florida Department of **Environmental Protection** 

3900 Commonwealth Blvd. Address:

MS 140 Tallahassee, FL 32399-3000

850.922.7205

Web Address: www.dot.state.fl.us

Address:

# INTERPRETIVE PLAN ROADSIDE FACILITIES DESIGN GUIDELINES



## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

## INTERPRETIVE PLAN ROADSIDE FACILITIES DESIGN GUIDELINES

One of the objectives of the Scenic Highway Interpretive Plan is to create prototypes and design guidelines for a built environment. The built environment includes Corridor Trailhead Stations, Visitor Centers, Outdoor Interpretive Sites, interpretive exhibit space, trails, rest areas, bicycle stops, airport kiosks, site improvements, and site furnishings.

The goal is to create a cohesive architectural theme and a unique "sense of place," while being sympathetic to the natural environment. Further, consistency in the built environment through the use of similar forms and materials provides continuity throughout the length of the Scenic Highway.

All structures should relate to each other within a family of design themes connected by form, line, color, and materials.

The themes of ecology, heritage, and culture are reflected in the design of the built environment.

## **Site Design Feature Prototypes**

## 1. Site Improvements

- •Large Picnic Shelter
  - Plan
  - Elevation
- Small Picnic Shelter
  - Plan
  - Elevation
- Restroom Building
  - Plan
  - Elevation
- Trail
  - Section Heritage Trail
  - Perspective Interpretive Trail

#### 2. Furnishings

- Bench
- Bicycle Rack
- Bollard
- Guardrail
- Site Lighting
- Trash Receptacle

#### 3. Signage

- Facilities Identification Sign
- Facilities Entry Sign
- Interpretive Signage/Exhibits
- Mile Marker Sign Post
- Resource Preservation and Directional Signage











## **Influences**

## **Railroad Buildings**



Dining hall built by Henry Flagler: Pigeon Key, Florida Photo courtesy of Florida Photographic Collection

The buildings designed for the Scenic Highway Interpretive Plan are influenced by Flagler's railroad buildings and the railroad, the heritage of which is intimately link with the Scenic Highway.

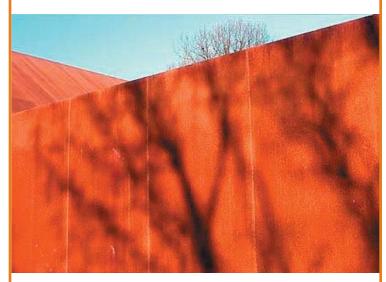
The front porch, sloped roof, dormer window, cupola, window dimensions, and general building shape reflect Flagler's railroad buildings. He used a bright yellow, which is the color used for the buildings in this plan. The trusses of the railroad bridges are reflected in the exposed trusses of the porches.



Florida East Coast Railway Key West Extension, looking through Bahia Honda Bridge Photo courtesy of Florida Photographic Collection

## **Materials**

## **Corten Steel**





Corten Steel is a type of steel that oxidizes naturally, giving it a dark brown color and a rough texture. It has a very high tensile strength, and in spite of its rusted appearance it is actually more resistant to damaging corrosion than standard forms of carbon steel.

It has been used in buildings and public art displays, and is an excellent material for the Keys' environment. It is also a material that complements the Keystone used in signage for this plan. Its coloring is reflective of the Gumbo-limbo tree.

## **Keystone**





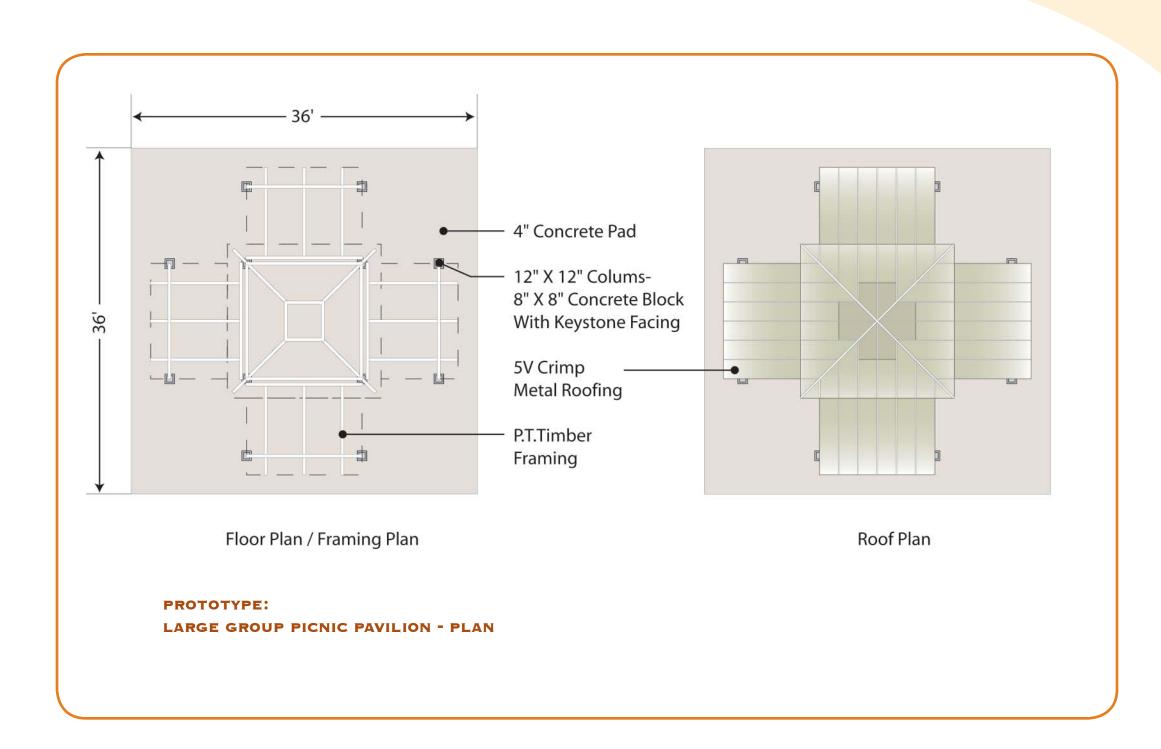
Keystone, or Key Largo Limestone, is fossilized coral reef. It is a white to light gray marine limestone that contains numerous fossil corals.

Keystone is used predominantly for the signage and the skirting of some buildings in this plan. As much as possible, a veneer of Keystone over concrete is used to preserve the resource, minimize cost, and to utilize the structural strength of concrete.

## **Site Improvements**

## **Large Group Picnic Pavilion - Plan View**

This illustration shows the floor and roof plan for the large group picnic pavilion.



## **Elevation**

The columns are concrete block with keystone facing and the roof is sloped metal. There is yellow trim to tie in with the yellow used throughout the corridor facilities.



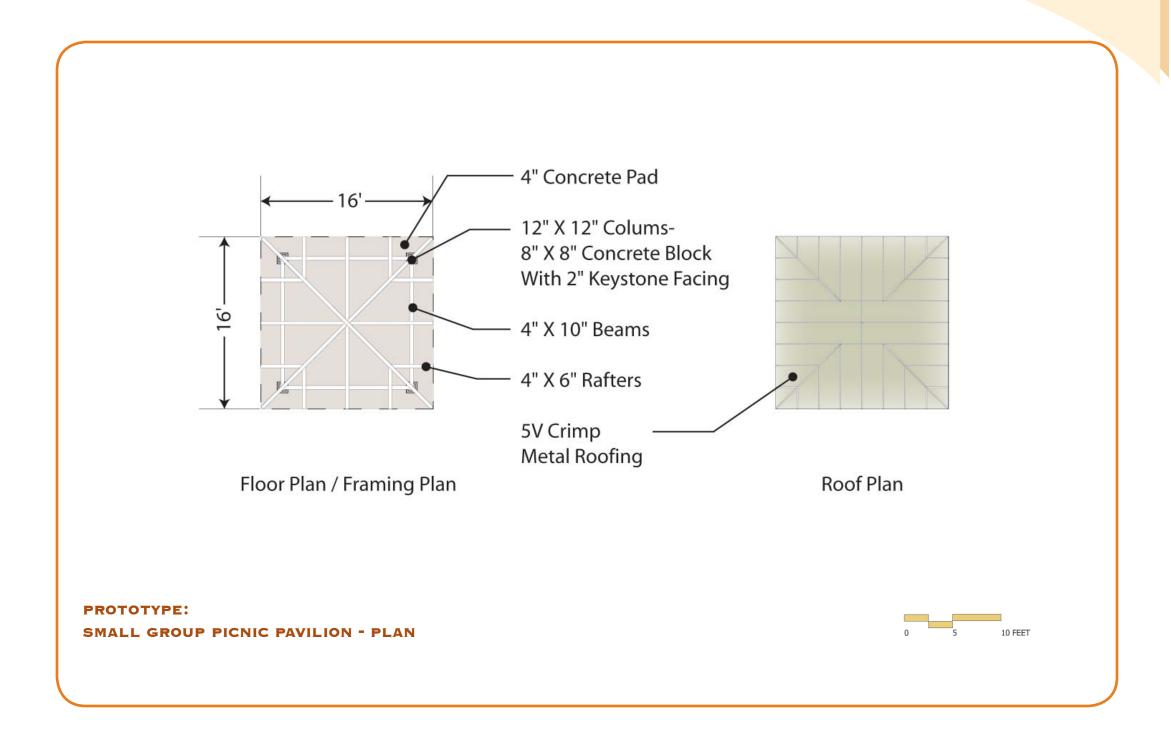
#### PROTOTYPE:

LARGE GROUP PICNIC PAVILION - ELEVATION



# **Small Group Picnic Pavilion Roof and Floor Plan**

This is a smaller version of the Large Group Picnic Pavilion and uses the same materials.



## **Small Group Picnic Pavilion Elevation**

This is a smaller version of the Large Group Picnic Pavilion.



Side View

Front View

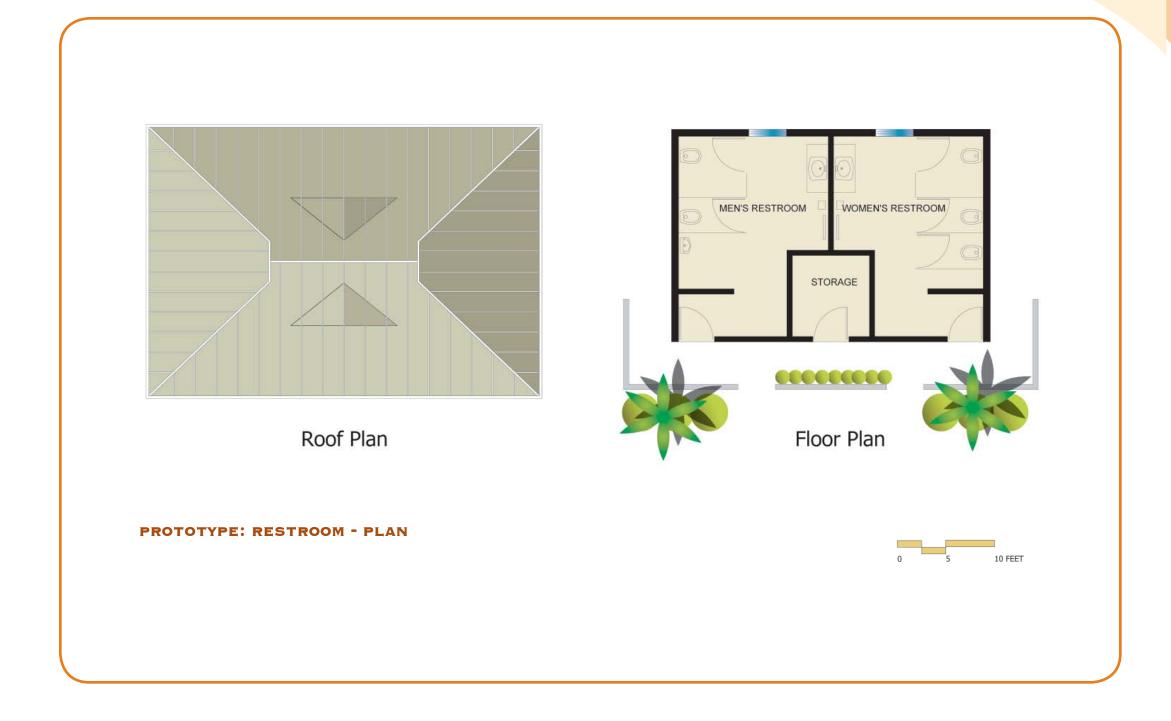
PROTOTYPE:

SMALL GROUP PICNIC PAVILION - ELEVATION



## **Restroom Plan View**

The restrooms consist of facilities for men and women and a storage area.



## **Restroom Elevation**

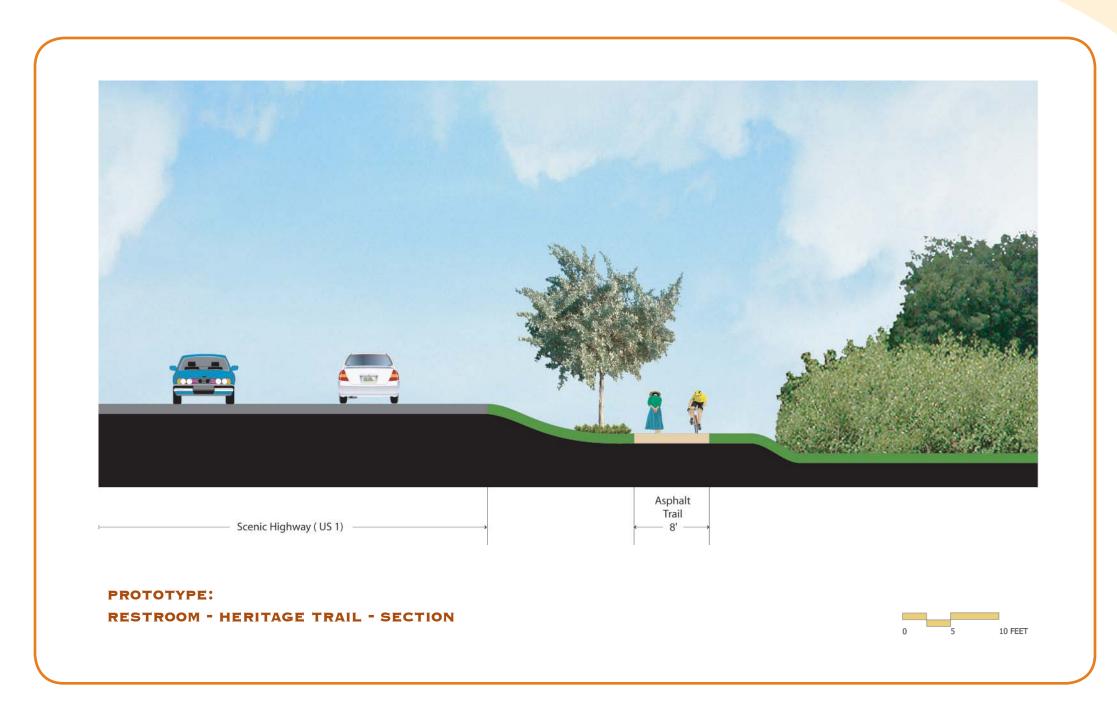
The metal roof, yellow Hardiplank construction, and Keystone accents are repeated in the restroom facilities.



## **Site Improvements**

## **Trail - Heritage Trail Section**

This illustration shows the relationship of the Heritage Trail to the Scenic Highway.



## **Interpretive Trail - Perspective**

The interpretive trails are orchestrated through the landscape to a point offering a view or an interpretive experience.

The paths are made of shell and bordered in Keystone.

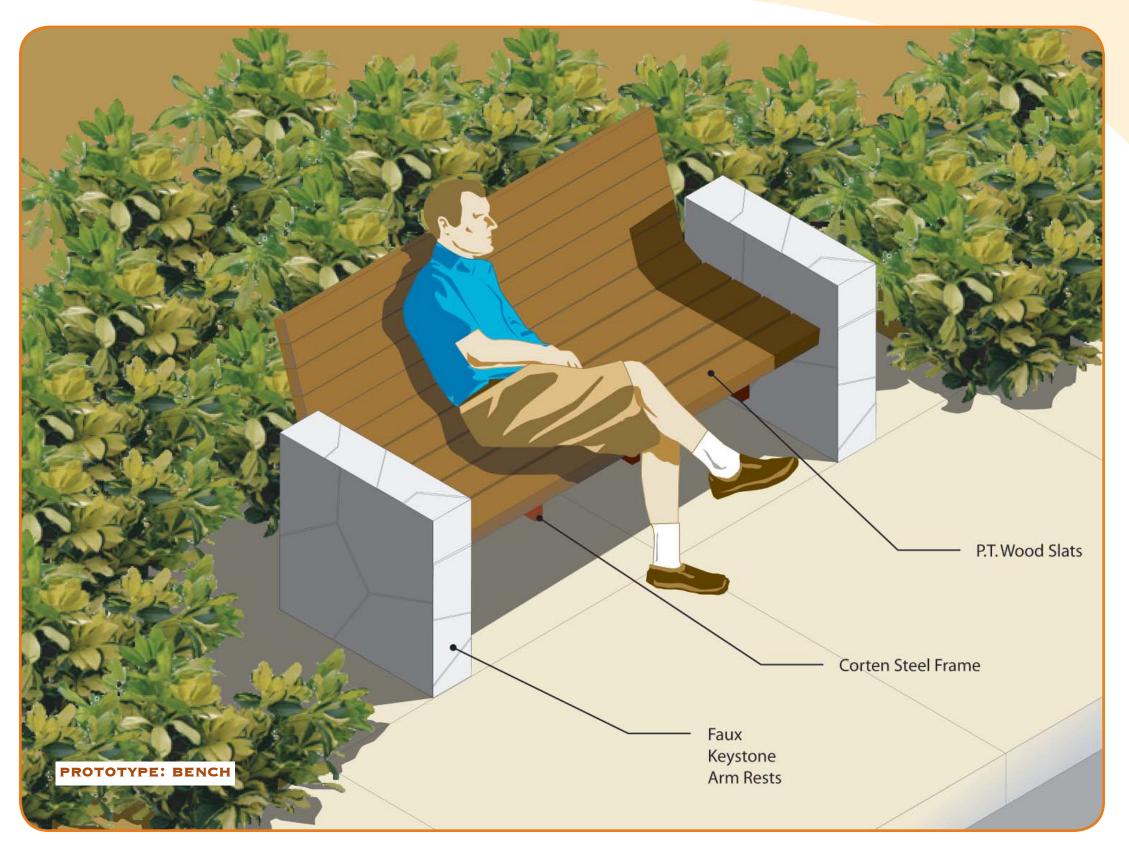


## **Site Furnishings**

The following illustrations are prototypes for site furnishings.

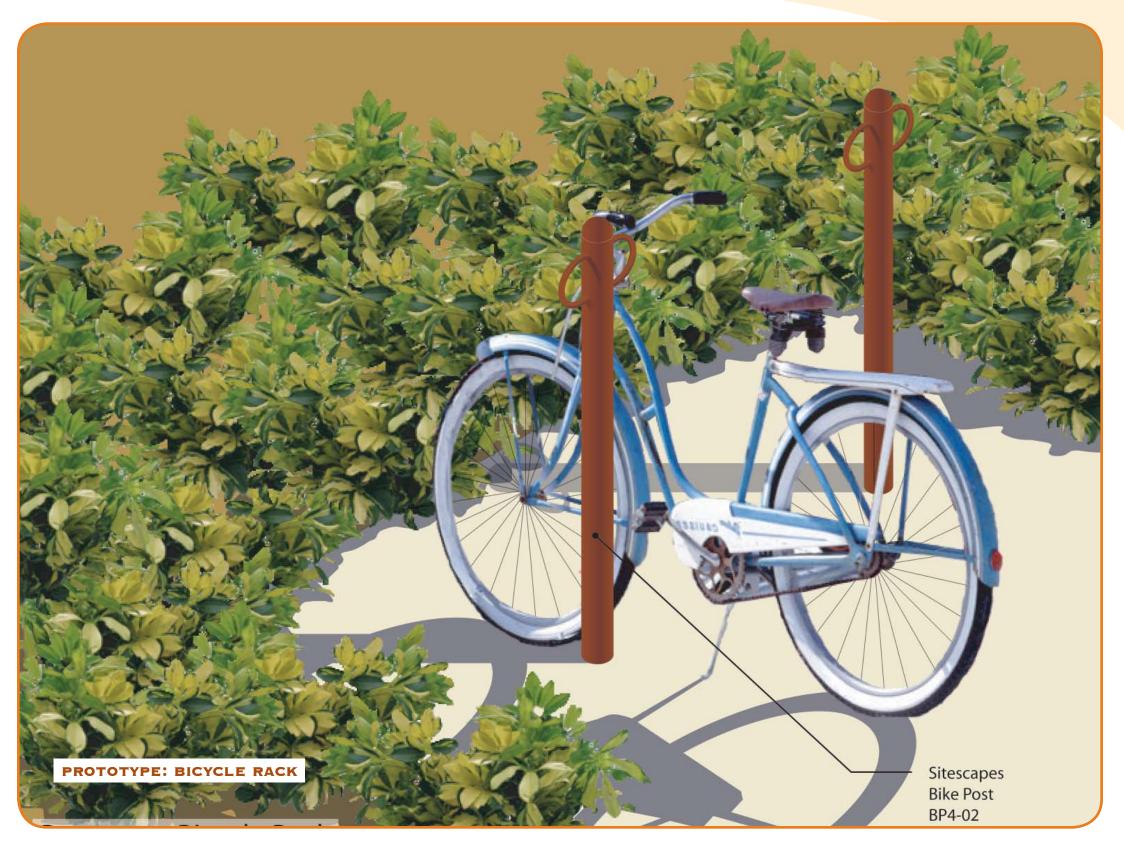
## Bench

Made of faux keystone, P.T. wood slats, and with a Corten Steel frame, the benches use the same materials used throughout the Scenic Highway facilities.



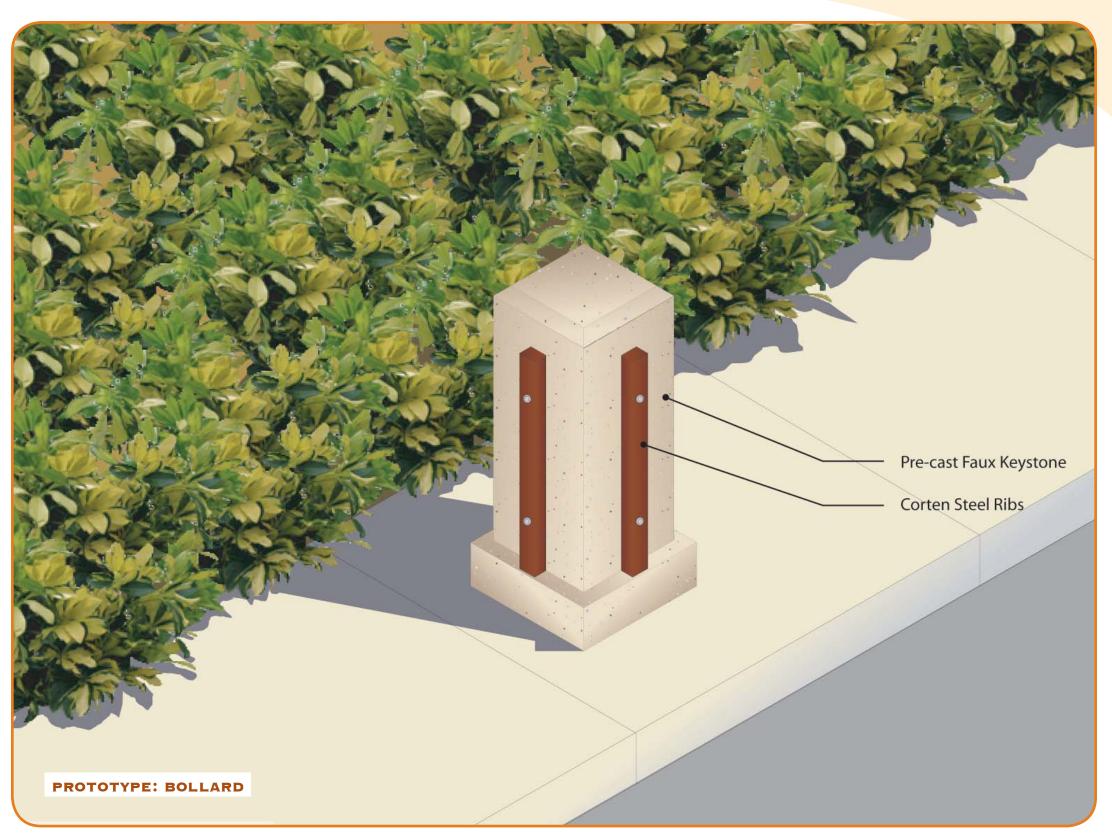
## **Bicycle Rack**

This bicycle rack offers a simple design, and the Corten Steel coloring blends in with the landscape while providing consistency with other site furnishings.



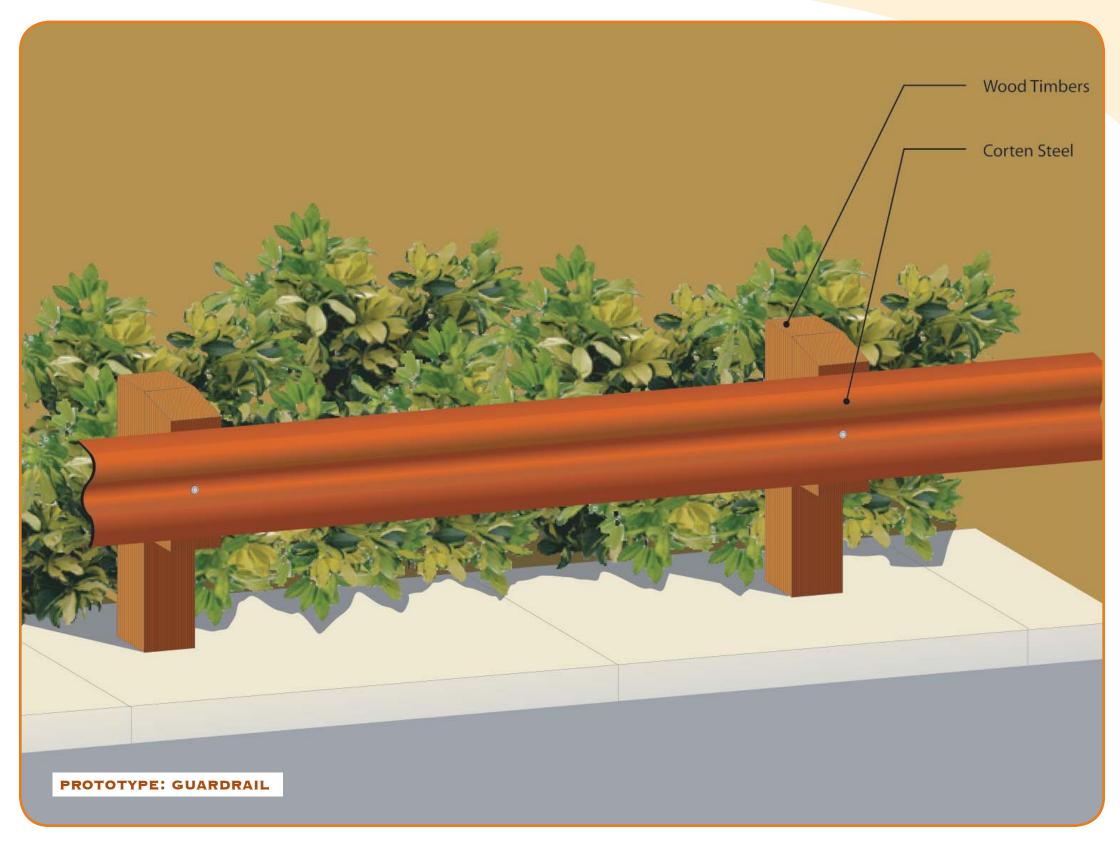
## **Bollard**

Faux Keystone and Corten Steel ribs comprise the bollard.



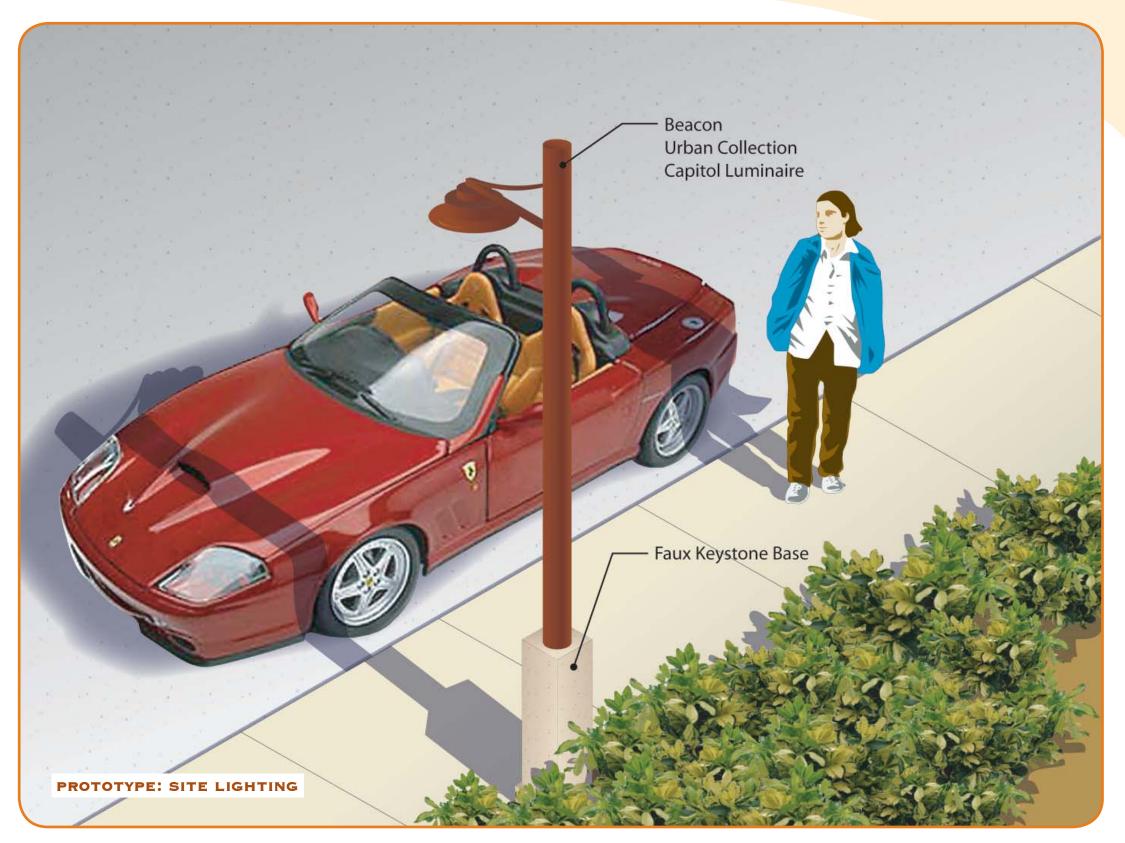
## Guardrail

The guardrail is composed of Corten Steel and wood timbers.



## **Site Lighting**

A faux keystone base and Corten Steel post provides consistency with the other site furnishings.



## **Trash Receptacle**

A faux Keystone Base, Corten Steel, and round form match the other site furnishings.



## Signage

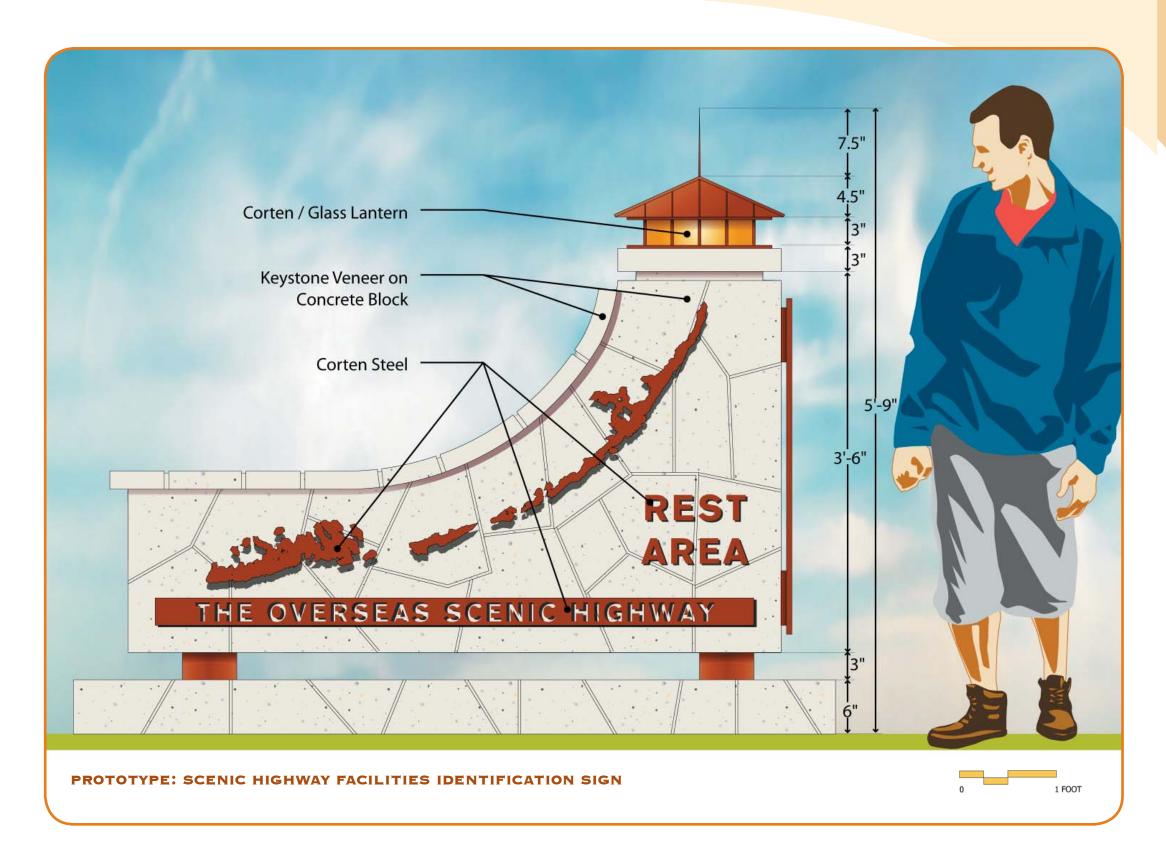
The purpose of signage is to create themes, including forms and colors, for all signs and also to ensure that signs fulfill the goals of education and wayfinding while complementing the landscape.

Keystone veneer on concrete block provides the basis for signage, and Corten Steel provides the accent.

## **Facilities Identification Sign**

Made of Keystone and Corten Steel, these signs identify the Corridor Physical facilities.

The glass lantern on top mimics the architectural features of the Corridor Trailhead Station and the Visitor Orientation Center, providing continuity.



## **Facilities Entry Sign**

This illustration shows the Facilities Entry Signage in relation to its surroundings. Its exterior is composed of Keystone and Corten Steel, and the colors blend in with the landscape.

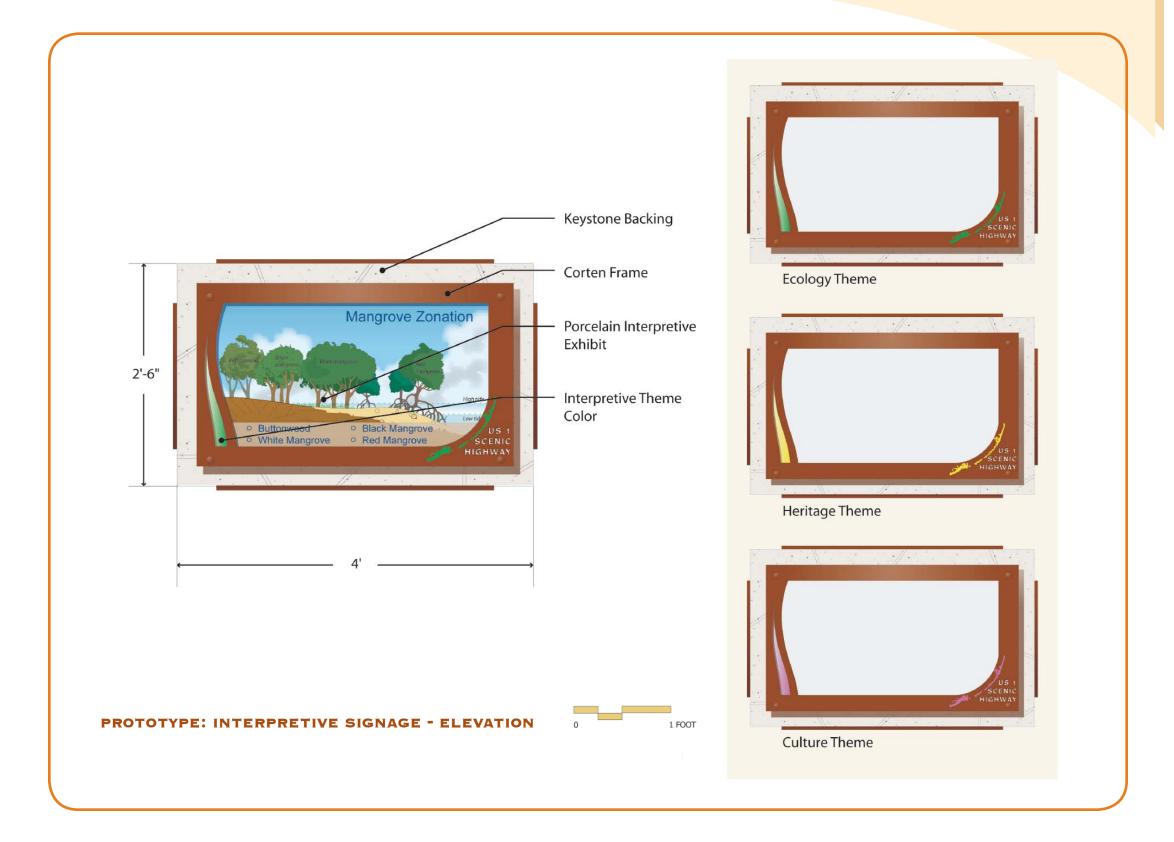


## **Interpretive Signage**

Keystone backing with a Corten Steel frame provide the basis for these interpretive signs, which will be displayed in the Community Outdoor Interpretive Sites.

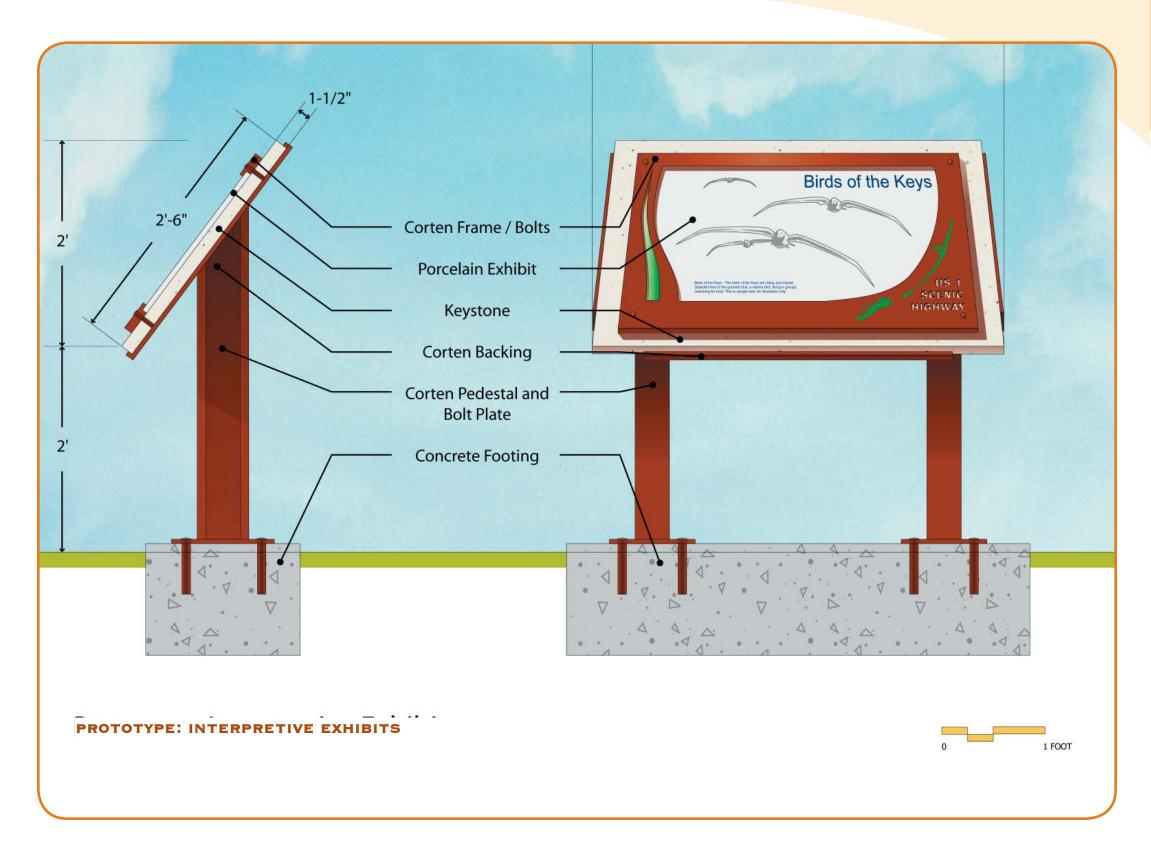
The Interpretive themes are color coded:

Green - Ecology Yellow - Heritage Fuchsia - Culture



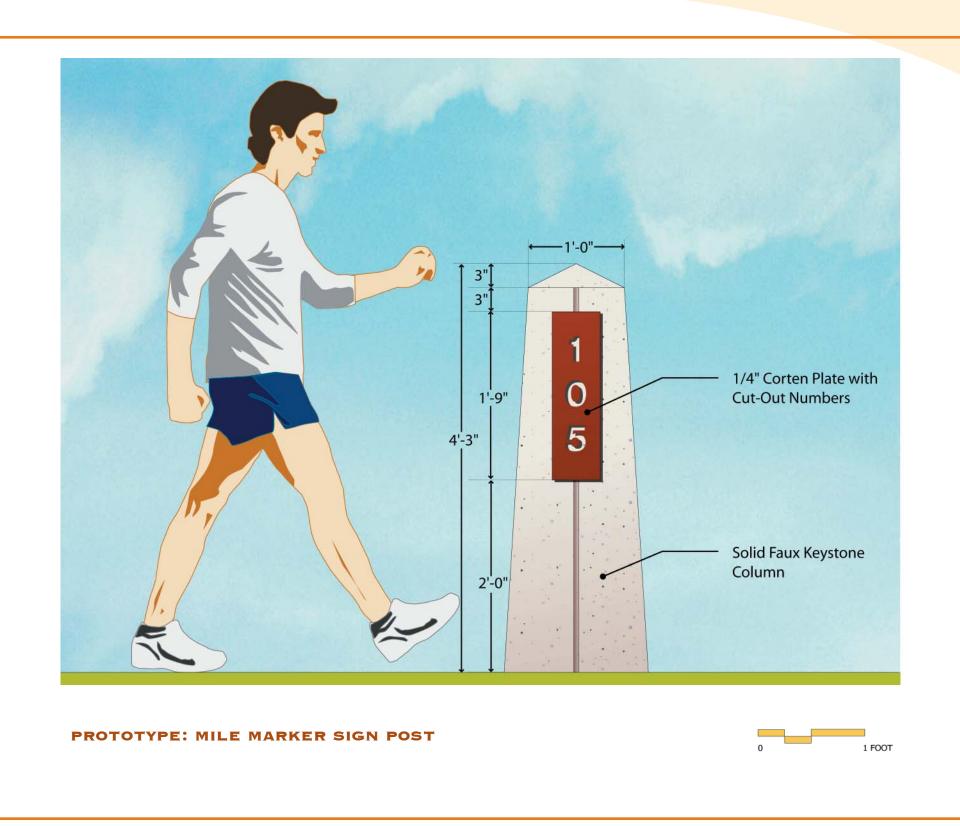
## **Interpretive Signage**

This illustration shows the size and composition of the interpretive signage.



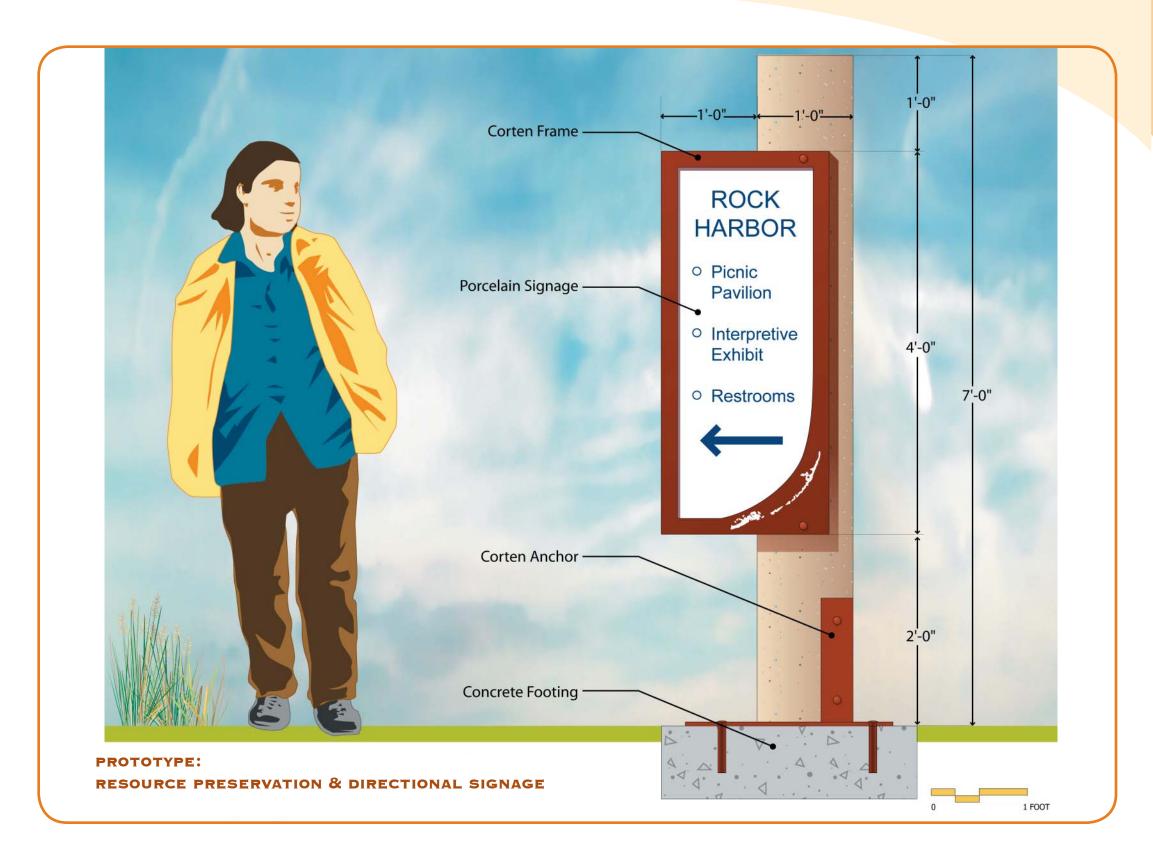
## Mile Marker Sign Post

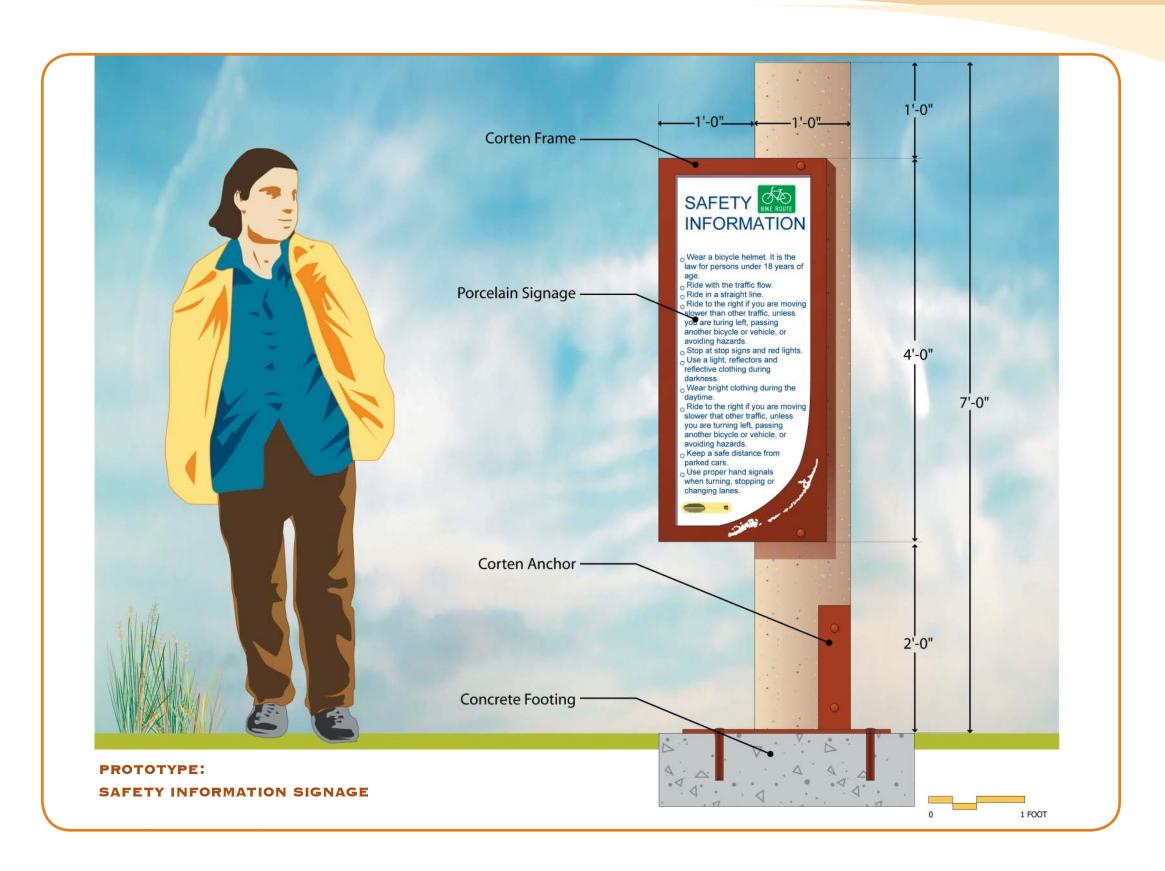
Made of faux keystone and Corten Steel, this illustration shows the size and form of the Mile Marker Sign Post.



## **Resource Preservation and Directional Signage**

These are directional signs. Corten Steel frames this sign and an outline of the Keys in the lower right hand corner is used throughout many of the signs.







#### **Printed Media**

A new family of printed and digital marketing materials including brochures, CDs, DVDs and website is suggested on this and the following page. The colors suggest the tropical na-

ture of the region. Photos and graphics suggest the water-based recreational opportunities which abound in the Keys.







#### **TRAILWAYS**

JANUARY 21



# FLORIDA KEYS OVERSEAS HERITAGE TRAIL

A STATE OF FLORIDA SCENIC HIGHWAY

EDUCATE, STIMULATE, CAPTIVA & ENTERTAIN...THE FLORIDA KEYS.

Your Place for Art. Architecture. Folk Life & Floribbean

Cuisine. The Overseas Scenic Highway Trial is a Linear

Park which Extends from Key Largo to Key West. Visit the

Interpretive Sites and You will Experience the Ecology.

Heritage & Culture of the Keys.

#### WHALE WATCH





Saweet Point Park acdfao lkodf ofkaodfd magna. 7th; acdf acdf acdf lkojadf.acdf. Shaughnecey acdf acdf acdf acdf acdf kedfjkdf;eldfk. Right?

This is a text bor that describes the seasons for whate watching. It arthaodf ashlip; as adflipsodf ashlipsodf ashlipsodf ashlipsodf ashlipsodf ashlipsodf ashlipsodf ashlipsodf

#### SIGNS OF THINGS TO COME

The Florida Keys are at the southern terminus of U.S. 1 which begain as "the old national road" along the Altantic coast from Calais, Maine, on the Canadian border, to Key West, Florida. The southern most 106 miles of the highway are locally named the Overseas Highway extending from the Florida mainland to Key West. In June of 2001, this stretch of roadway was designated a State Scenic Highway by the Florida Department of Transportation. The Heritage Trail project, intimately intertwined with the Scenic Highway and sharing common interpretive plan goals, is administered by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection.





### CONCH. THIS

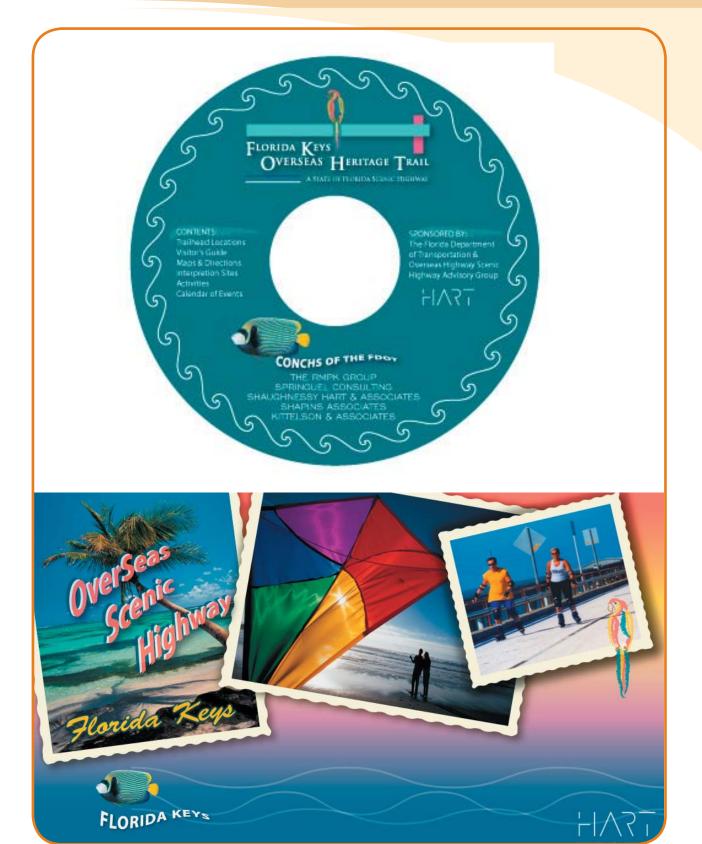


This queek conch creeps into Moore's Seafood parking lot every afternoon to sun and listen to jazz. She is about 250 years old and has had a crush on Russell for the last 10 years

#### The Conch Republic

Key's residents approach life with a sense of humor and expect all visitor's to adjust their lifestyles accordingly. The Conch Republic is available to assist with any attitude adjustments necessary to preserve the culture, ecology and heritage this attitude





## PHASE ONE PROPOSED FACILITY SITE DESIGNS





## CHAPTER EIGHT

## CHAPTER EIGHT

## PROPOSED FACILITY SITE DESIGNS



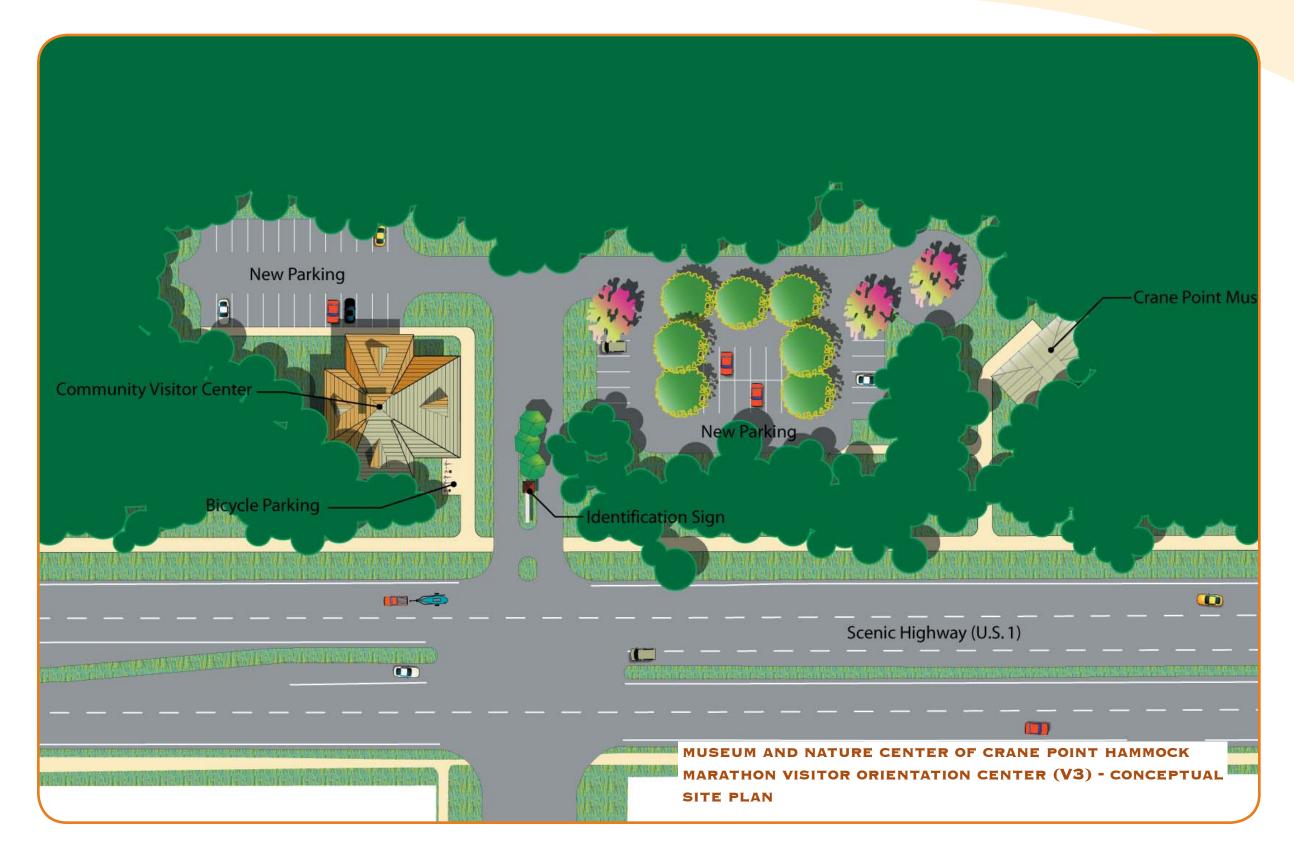


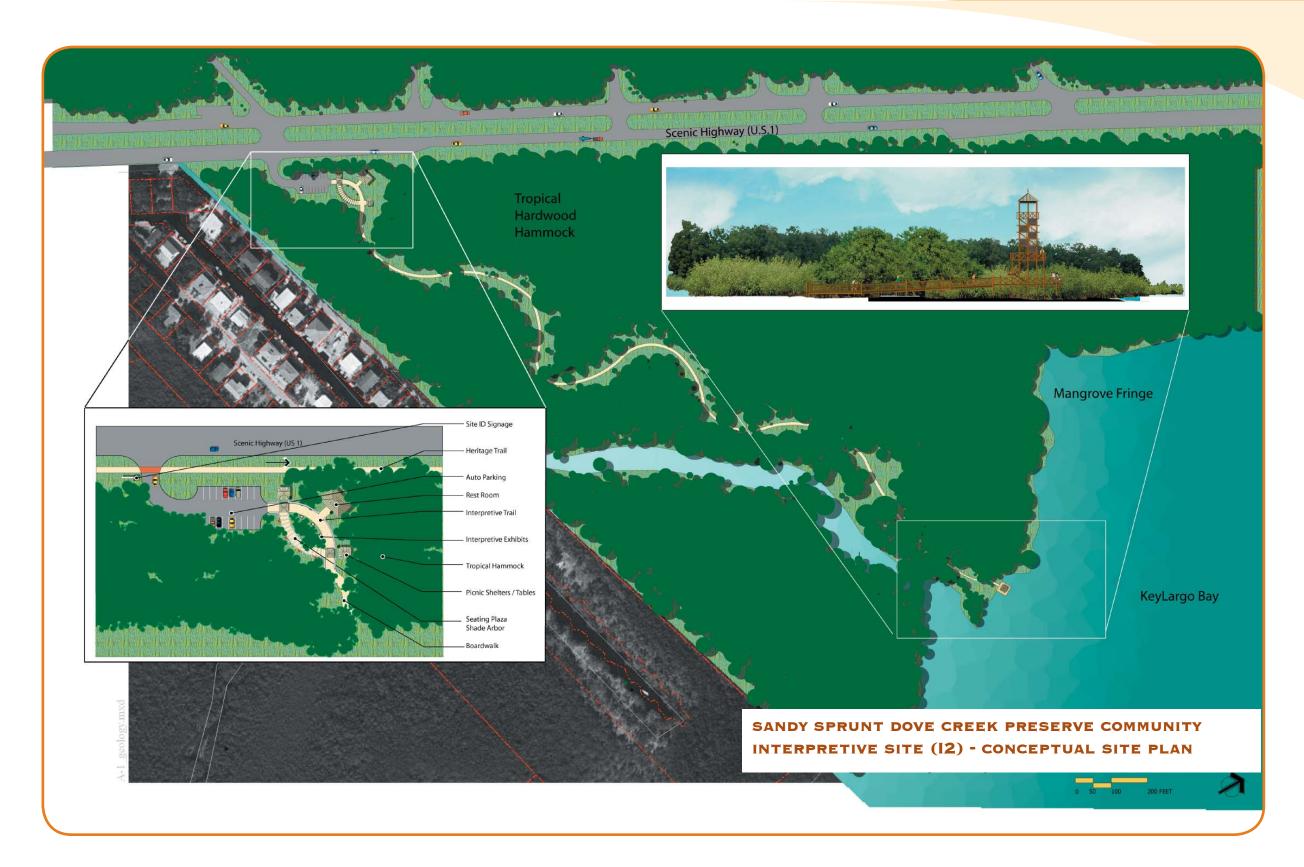




























Community and Regional Planning Environmental Planning Landscape Architecture Land Planning Urban Design